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THE
LADIES OF BEVER HOLLOW.

A Tale of English Country Life.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

"Our name, while virtue thus we tender,
Shall sweetly sound, where'er 'tis spoke,
And all the great ones, they shall wonder
How they respect such little folk.

"Still shall each kind returning season
Sufficier^t for our ~~wishes~~ give
For we will live a life of reason,
And that's the only life to live!"—WINIFREDA.

NEW EDITION.



LONDON:
RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1860.

THE NEW YORK

HERALD.

1864-68

WINCHESTER:
PRINTED BY HUGH BARCLAY,
HIGH STREET.

TO THE READER.

THERE are some traits in one of the ladies of Bever Hollow that may remind a few of one whom they loved and lost, but whose circumstances had *no* resemblance to those of the fictitious character, except that she bore a wasting, fatal illness, with fortitude and cheerfulness. Advantage is taken, however, of her position as a sufferer, to speak sundry words of counsel and comfort to those in like case, though the accidents of her story are only useful to heighten the interest.

Sir E. Bulwer Lytton has lately found it needful to remind his readers that ideal art and matter-of-fact portraiture are wholly distinct from each other.

June 1, 1858.

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THE LADIES OF BEVER HOLLOW.

CHAPTER I.

The Butter Badger.

Bent as he moves, and needing frequent rest.
Yet do such travellers find their own delight;
And their hard service, deemed debasing now,
Gained merited respect in simpler times.
When squire, and priest, and they who round them dwelt
In rustic sequestration, all dependent
Upon the pedlar's toil, supplied their wants
Or pleased their fancies with the wares he brought.

WORDSWORTH.

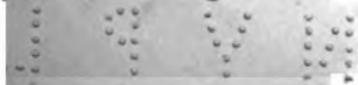
SOME years ago, a man with a basket and pack was crossing a lone moor, in one of our midland districts, bending his face against the wind, and making as direct a way as he could towards a white house, set against a dark hill.

He was one of those negotiators who s

perhaps, in some secluded parts of the country, go from one lonely farm-house to another, to pick up such fresh butter, honey, and eggs as thrifty housewives have to dispose of, in the way of barter for tea, sugar, snuff, and such small groceries.

He was now on his way to the Hill-house Farm. It stood rather disconsolately peering over a high brick-wall, a few yards of which were considerably cut down before the entrance, and supplied by a row of white palings, but which almost entirely concealed the small farm in the rear. The front of the house faced the north, which made it look bleak and cold: there were no carts or wains lumbering to and fro, no horses being watered in the pond, no sound of the flail in the barn; and, altogether, it did look rather dreary and uninviting. All who are acquainted with farm life must be familiar with this occasional appearance of torpor.

The butter-badger, no whit dismayed, raised the latch of a small side-door in the wall, but found the inside bolt shot. This threw him out: however, he next applied himself to the little white gate facing the front door, the knocker of which he boldly raised to give a loud single knock. After waiting some time for a response, he knocked again; after another pause, a third time; and then his patience gave way, and he began to think that, unless he were



quite certified to the contrary, he should have concluded nobody to be at home.

After a moment's hesitation, he proceeded along the little pebbled walk between the house and the palings, and looked furtively in at one of the windows. The strip of garden in front was kept with perfect neatness, and planted with larkspurs, marigolds, lavender, stocks, and other common flowers; none of which threw very well, by reason of the bleak aspect. The butter-badger paid them no attention at all; but, peering into the parlour window, at first timidly and next scrutinizingly, he saw what petrified him—a bundle of lilac-coloured drapery lying on the floor, which contained the senseless body of a lady.

It was no time to stand upon trifles—the butter-badger ran with all his force against the green door of a slight lath partition, which, connecting the house with the garden-wall, where it joined the palings, aided in shutting the inner premises out of sight.

The door, thus assailed, easily gave way; and the butter-badger rushed into a blaze of warm, sunny light,—the mellow autumnal sun streaming brightly on a sheltered country garden, full of gaudy flowers, fruit-trees on southern walls, straight turfen walks, clipped arbours, stone images, and grottoes.

The badger ran round to the scullery-door, which he found on the latch,—passed through

the empty kitchen, along a stone passage, which presently became covered with matting,—and bolt into the parlour, which he had never entered before in his life.

Having, with great trepidation, raised the lady in his arms, and placed her on a sofa, he discovered, on hasty examination, a small wound near the temple, from which blood was trickling. To his relief, there were no signs of suicide or murder—the case appeared simply one of accident. But as his experience in such cases was small, he only ventured to fetch some cold water, and dash it in her face, before he set out in quest of assistance.

Instead of returning to the moor, he ran down a pleached alley, and opened a garden-door, which let him out on a sort of straggling common, with several small cottages about it. He was proceeding to the nearest of these, when he saw a young lady, dressed in white, with a green parasol, walking leisurely along. To her he forthwith applied with, “Sarvant miss—beg pardon, but missis is in a fit!”

“A fit!—Mrs. who?” said the young lady, looking much alarmed.

“Mrs. Althea—that’s to say, the eldest of the Miss Halls, of the Hill Farm; and there seems to be nobody with her in the house.”

“Dear me!” ejaculated the young lady, “and we have never seen one another!”

This was addressed rather to herself than to

the butter-badger, whom she immediately and alertly followed whence he came.

On passing through the door in the wall into that gay old garden, with its wealth of dahlias, hollyhocks, escolzias, geraniums, and roses, she quite started at the unexpected brightness and beauty of the scene; but, the next moment, followed him into the house, and busied herself in humane care of the swooning lady. Almost the next minute, a stupid-looking country girl, with a key on her finger and a small mug in her hand, appeared in the doorway, and stood agape; then exclaimed, "Law, whatever's come over missis?"

CHAPTER II.

The Female Farmers.

As, ceaseless still, she threw, alert, alive,
 The working bee in full or empty hive,
 Busy and careful, like that working bee,
 No time for love nor tender cares had she,
 But when the farmers paid their amorous vows,
 She talked of market-steeds and patent ploughs.

CRABBE.

THERE were two Miss Halls, Althea and Catherine, daughters of a country gentleman of ancient family, whose son had been sheriff of the county. But the family had dwindled to nothing; the estate had melted away, and death had deprived it of all but these two female representatives. On losing their father, whose energies were much impaired during the last years of his life, the sisters found themselves in middle age, with about four hundred pounds apiece, and no one to help them.

Both had great force of mind; but one was studious, the other active; one was thoughtful, the other practical; one could conceive and suggest, the other could execute; one could

bear much pain, the other go through much labour; one was cheerful, but serious, the other jovial, and occasionally dull; one was Mary, the other Martha.

Though their persons were not unpleasing, they were not so young as to be likely to be sought in marriage by men suitable to their birth and education. They had no kindred to offer them a genteel dependence, nor any inclination to separate from one another, and go out into a world of which they had seen little, in quest of lucrative employment. So, having talked the matter well over, they took a farm, hired labourers, and embarked in husbandry. Mrs. Kitty soon became a capital practical farmer, without having much native elegance to lose, nor any need to lose her sterling good-nature and kindness. Mrs. Althea read treatises on agriculture, kept the accounts, wrote business-letters, looked after the housekeeping, and managed the flower-garden and the bees, till she was laid low by a tedious and sometimes excruciating chronic affection, which threatened to last all her life, without much shortening it. They had gone on prosperously for many years, respected and loved by gentry, yeomanry, and peasantry; and if there were a few sneering fellows, who would speak among themselves of Farmer Kitty and Master Kate, they were not those whose word went for much, or who had the good word of many others.

When Mrs. Althea came to herself, she looked, as the butter-badger afterwards expressed it, "skeared-like;" which was natural enough, seeing that she found two persons looking closely at her, one of whom she had never seen before; the other, never in that room.

With a somewhat bewildered air, she said, "Who are you? is anything the matter?"

"I am Rhoda Hill—the youngest Miss Hill of Carlton Hall," replied the young lady; "and was told by this good man that he had found you in a fit."

"Why,—you are John Twiddy, I think?" said Mrs. Althea, doubtfully.

"Just so," said the badger, ducking his head; "I finds you on the grund, mum, all of a crump, and splashes some cold water on ye, and fetches this young gentlewoman, no one seeming to be in the house to tend on ye—and now, may be, I'd best cut away."

"I'll thank you better the next time I see you, John, than I can now," said Mrs. Althea, as he suited the action to the word. "Where have *you* been, Jenny?"

"I'm sure my back wasn't turned a minute," said the girl, looking both ashamed and sulky. There are some who always turn sulky when they ought simply to be ashamed.

"Well, get me another dress as quickly as you can, at any rate," said Mrs. Althea, "for

this is quite wet: I suppose some water has been thrown upon me."

"By the man, not by me," said Rhoda, as Jenny went off; "I dare say he hardly knew what he did, for he seemed very much frightened. Are you in pain?"

"I feel bruised and shaken, that is all. What is this?"

"Your temple was bleeding, and I dare say it is very tender: I have closed the wound pretty well."

"Thank you gratefully. Ah! I remember now all about it. Our old, faithful servant has a holiday, a rare indulgence; and this lass, being unaccustomed to my ways or to confinement, has left me to wait pretty much on myself. It was time to take my medicine; she had put the little hand-bell out of my reach; I was not strong enough to make her hear my voice; and, in attempting to reach the bell, I lost my balance, and fell with my head against the fender."

"But, dear me! how unfit you are to be left! and what a much worse accident it might have been."

"It might, indeed, my dear;—excuse my calling you so, but your kindness has made us friends at once."

"I am very much obliged to you for calling me one," said Rhoda, shyly.

"Why, you have been a good Samaritan to

me," said Mrs. Althea; "I shall tell Kitty so, when she returns from the horse-fair: she is gone to sell our old grey, and get a useful little pony. Oh, here comes my dress!"

And with some difficulty the two inexperienced assistants inducted the poor lady into her dry habiliments; after which she made Jenny give her her medicine, and then laid back her head on the cushion Rhoda had lightly shaken up for her.

"And now, my kind young friend," said she, "you may leave me with an easy mind, for I shall settle to sleep, and want nothing."

"Do you *mind* my being here?" said Rhoda, timidly.

"Mind it! oh no! I am always grateful for the sight of a bright young face."

"Please, then, to let me stay; for it is quite a treat to me to have anything like a duty to fulfil. Mine is such a purposeless life!"

"It should not be—but, my dear, my eyes are involuntarily closing under the influence of my narcotic. I am afraid I shall be asleep in another minute."

"Oh, never mind: I will take up a book, and read till you wake."

"Aye, that will be your only resource," drowsily responded Mrs. Althea, whose eyes were fast closing; and the next minute she was in profound repose.

Rhoda presently raised her eyes from her

book to the careworn but pleasant face of her charge, whom she gazed on with interest and respect.

Having dwelt and speculated sufficiently on her personal appearance, which was unmistakeably that of a gentlewoman, and woven a fanciful little romance in connexion with the hair ring on the pale hand, she next began quietly to extend her observations to the room in which she was sitting. It was long, low and irregular, with three windows, one of which, being that through which the badger had espied Mrs. Althea, was dull enough, overlooking the moor; another was a semi-hexagon bow, opening with folding sashes, painted white, into the cheerful garden; and the third was a smaller window, in an odd little niche, contrived by removing a cupboard, which was in the side wall of the house, and, shaded by honeysuckle and Cape jessamine, commanded a side view of the garden wall, with bee-hives under it, and a peep into the farmyard. This was Mrs. Kitty's favourite corner; here were her wicker chair, stuffed footstool, gardening scissors, and a bundle of red and blue shreds for the fruit-trees, to testify to the fact. The ceiling was low, and crossed by one or two whitewashed beams: the walls were panelled, but disfigured by the hand of bad taste, which had painted them pea-green, picked out with white. But little of them, however, offended the eye, the

greater portion being covered with neat, plain bookcases, filled with an inviting and very miscellaneous collection of history, travels, memoirs, essays, poetry, moral philosophy, divinity, treatises on farming and gardening,—aye, and sundry old novels too, some worth much, others little or nothing. Here, by way of curiosity, are a few of the names of works long since devoted to the grocer and pastry-cook—

“Constantia Neville;” “Shenstone Green;” “The Poet’s Day, or Imagination’s Ramble;” “A Plain Answer to a Plain Question;” “Remarks on the late Session of Parliament;” (date, 1804!) “The Linnet, or Annual Museum; being a Collection of all the Songs for the year 1803, with a Frontispiece.” “Amazement;” by Mrs. Meeke. “Virtuous Poverty;” by Henry Siddons, 3 vols., boards. “The Opportunity; or, Reasons for an Immediate Alliance with St. Domingo;” by the Author of “The Crisis of the Sugar Colonies.” “A Dive into Buonaparte’s Councils;” “The Wiccamical Chaplet; a selection of Original Poetry, comprising smaller poems, classical trifles; edited by George Huddersford.” “Alvar and Seraphina; or, the Troubles of Murcia;” “The Tourifications of Malachi Meldrum;” “Edwin; or, the Heir of Ella;” &c., &c., &c.

Along with these, none of which, to do them justice, appeared with uncut pages, were to be

seen in graver guise, Spenser, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton, Sidney's "Arcadia;" Rollin, Rapin, Geoffrey of Monmouth, Bede, John Speed, "Old Stow;" Clarendon's Life, in three volumes, and Clarendon's Rebellion, in six; Jackson's Works, Hammond's ditto; Sherlock, Atterbury, Tillotson; all the British Essayists, from the Spectator to the Lounger; all the British poets published by Cooke; Sir Thomas More's Life, by his grandson; "The Utopia;" Karamsin's Travels; Pictet's "Voyage en Angleterre;" Miss Seward's Works; Correspondence of Miss Talbot with Mrs. Elizabeth Carter; Walter Scott's Poems, in quarto; the earliest editions of Southey, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Crabbe, Miss Edgeworth, Mrs. Elizabeth Hamilton, Mrs. Grant of Laggan, &c., &c., &c.

Rhoda, who was a book-devourer, fed upon these and other titles with a hungry eye. Then she beheld with wondering admiration, the expenditure of industrious ingenuity in the curtains and carpet of the room. The former were of patchwork, in roses of many-coloured hexagons, on a sad-coloured ground, lined with pea-green, and fringed with a pretty home-manufactured fringe of green and white. The carpet was dark green cloth or drugget, bordered with a broad edging of gay flowers in worsted-work. The chair-seats, also, were tent-stitch; there were globes, a tambour-frame, a lace-

pillow, a spinning-wheel, a striking-clock in a square picture framed and glazed, a case of dried butterflies, another of stuffed birds, various curious specimens of turning and carving, an ebony cabinet, and an old piano, painted like Salvator Rosa's harpsichord, with a design comprising music-books, wind-instruments, an hour-glass, and a skull.

CHAPTER III.

Theodora.

A creature not too bright or good
For human nature's daily food,
For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
Praise, blame, love, kisses, tears and smiles.

RHODA was turning round after completing her survey, when she started and blushed a little to find Mrs. Althea's hazel eyes fixed on her with a keen and amused scrutiny.

There is something in youth and freshness peculiarly pleasant to an invalid in the decline of life, whose shady hours are seldom lighted up by such moral sunbeams. Nor was Rhoda too gay, brilliant, and flaunting for the subdued tone of a patient sufferer. There is a passage in an old number of Blackwood's Magazine that will give no bad idea of Rhoda Hill. It begins thus:—

“In the spirit, we have had for nearly twenty years, an only daughter, and her Christian and Scriptural name is Theodora,—‘the gift of God.’

“The creature is most religious. Of all

books, she loves best her Bible; of all days, most blessed to her is the Sabbath. She goeth but to one church. That one pew is a pleasant place, hung round with holy thoughts as with garlands of flowers, whose bloom is perennial, and whose balm breathes of a purer region.

“She is not the mere child of impulse. In her bosom, pure and shady, feeling has grown up in the light of thought. Simple indeed is her heart, but wise in its simplicity:—innocence sees far and clear with her dove-like eyes. Theodora has her *duties*; on them she meditates both day and night. A life of duty is the only cheerful one; for joy springs from the affections, and 'tis the great law of nature that, without good deeds, all good affection dies, and the heart becomes utterly desolate. . .

. . . “And what books, besides her Bible, does Theodora read? History, to be sure, and romances, and voyages and travels, and poetry. Preaching and praying are not the whole of religion: sermons, certainly, are very spiritual, especially Jeremy Taylor's; but so is Spenser's ‘Fairy Queen,’ if we mistake not, and Milton's ‘Paradise Lost.’ This our Theodora knows, nor fears to read them. . . .

“And what may be the amusements of our Theodora? Whatever her own heart, thus instructed and guarded, may desire. No nun is she; no veil hath she taken, but the veil which nature weaves of mantling blushes.

. . . "Now, were you to meet our Theodora in company, ten to one, you would not know it was she; possibly you might not see anything very beautiful about her; for the beauty we love strikes not by a sudden and single blow; but is like the vernal sunshine, still steal, steal, stealing through a dim, tender, pensive sky, and even when it has reached its brightest, tempered and subdued by a fleecy veil of clouds."

Thus far the venerable Christopher; a true poet in prose. Having likened Rhoda to Theodora, it remains for you, reader, to become acquainted with her by degrees, as Mrs. Althea was about to do.

"Well," said she with a smile that had much sweetness in it, "I dare say you are wondering how my sister Kitty and I can set any value on such a collection of old rubbish as we are surrounded by;—but they are all family relics, my dear; all have their pedigree—from the ostrich-egg and cocoa-nuts mounted in filigree, to the Noah's Ark in bugle-work, and the landscape burnt on wood with a red-hot poker. All have their story; and, to Kitty and me, their value. Why, our plate-chest (not quite so considerable as yours at the Hall!) contains sundry articles, the very names and uses of which have become obsolete! What think you of a silver posnet, to butter eggs? or a plum-porridge ladle? or a broad-rimmed

silver plate for sugar with Rhenish wine? Kitty and I have a sort of pride and fond pleasure in the little worn-out nicknacks that connect us with old times."

"I should have just the same," cried Rhoda.
"But, tell me; are you not now in pain?"

"No, I have slept it off, though my head aches, and my forehead, if touched, feels very tender. But the accident might have been far worse. I had a providential escape. It was full of mercy, as everything that befalls us is. But now, my dear, you had really better go home, unless you will remain to drink tea with Kitty and me. We have tea at six."

"And we dine at seven," said Rhoda, laughing; "so I shall reach home in plenty of time after giving up my charge of you to your sister, if she is punctual."

"Oh yes, she will return before dusk, though the days are fast shortening. And she will come home with her pockets full of gingerbread nuts, and her head full of news. We always make a little festival of market-days, and have a cosy fire, and something extra for the tea-table, and shut ourselves up snug, and then she tells and I hear all the news."

"How very cheerful you are!"

"Where's the good of being otherwise? If Religion is the champion under whose shield the poor invalid is glad to take refuge, Amusement is no less the little foot-page who helps to

carry the invalid's burthen. Una herself was no better attended! But I can't be cheerful sometimes. Nature will extort tears and sighs. Still, it is a duty to be cheerful when we can."

"When we *can*. And yet, do you know, Mrs. Althea, that I, who have no pain to bear, and whose little grievances I should be ashamed to tell you lest you should laugh at them,—have often great difficulty in being cheerful; nay, I sometimes cannot accomplish it."

"My dear, I am not at all surprised to hear you say so."

"Indeed? I thought you would be very much surprised."

"My dear young friend, I have been young myself."

And she took Rhoda's hand with an air of such great kindness, that tears started into the young girl's eyes.

"Oh," said Rhoda, stooping to kiss that pale hand, "how precious sympathy is!"

"Why don't you show it more, then, to others? I have taken you by surprise! You were thinking of others sympathising with *you*; but, my dear, our Lord has said, 'it is more blessed to give than to receive;' and if this holds good with regard to the perishable things of this life, how much more of those which, as you truly say of sympathy, are really precious? If we had never felt the want of it ourselves, we should not know from experience how largely

we should bestow it. We are expressly told that even our Saviour was sent into the world to know suffering, often unpitied and misunderstood, that He might be able by personal experience to succour others."

"Mrs. Althea! you seem the very friend I want! Will you let me come and see you often?"

"My dear, it will be a great pleasure to me. Though I hope I know how to value in some degree the blessings of seclusion, and in the day of young health and imagination was even very fond of it, a worn invalid may have too much of it, in hours when she cannot even *think*. The smallest change, the entrance of a little child, of a merry schoolboy, of a homely dependent, is then a boon: how much more so the entrance of a feeling, cultivated companion!"

"Feeling, I can say I am, though very imperfectly cultivated," said Rhoda. "But our ages are so different that I thought you might not care to see me."

"Differences of taste and principle are more important than differences of age," said Mrs. Althea. "And even great differences of tastes, characters, and habits may exist between companions who get on very well together. How many men choose wives who are their opposites! And Kitty and I go on as harmoniously as possible, though as different as black and white. You and your sisters—"

"I have no sisters!—"

"You surprise me. I thought there had been three Miss Hills of the Hall."

"Two are my cousins, and I am the third. I have lost my dear father and mother, and live with my uncle, who is very kind to me, but to whom I am of no importance or particular interest. I have lived with him nearly two years: my cousins are handsome, accomplished girls; but somehow we do not take much pleasure in one another. They are older than I am, very high spirited, and fond of gaiety. At first they were feeling and compassionate; but since I put off my black dress, they seem to think I can have nothing to be sorry for any longer—"

"My dear, that is always the case."

"And I don't know what to do, what to set about. I was my dear mother's nurse, house-keeper, amanuensis: now, I seem wanted by nobody."

"I exactly understand your case. Say no more of it: I will think it over."

"What did you find good for yourself when you were orphaned?"

"Many things. One of them was considering the pathway already traced by my own dear mother's *footsteps in the snow*."

Rhoda was going to speak, when looking up, she saw Mrs. Kitty standing in the doorway, in a man's hat and cravat, with a riding-habit dragged over her arm.

"Servant, Miss," said Mrs. Kitty, touching her hat, and advancing into the room. This was meant for humour, for Mrs. Kitty was a rough diamond.

"How have you got on, old lady?" said she, bluntly, but kindly, to Mrs. Althea. "Why, I thought you would have quite a spread for me; and there's neither tea-kettle nor fire. Never mind. My horse has warmed me, and I've warmed my horse."

"We have had a little accident in your absence, Kitty," said Mrs. Althea. "I fell down and stunned myself, while Jenny was out; and the butter-badger, who happened to look in, fetched this kind young lady—Miss Rhoda Hill—to my assistance."

"Stunned? that sounds ugly! Let us see," said Mrs. Kitty, scrutinizing her sister's forehead with considerable anxiety. "Humph! it does not look very bad—" and turning away from what did not seem a very serious matter at first sight, she paid her respects with civility and cordiality to the young visitor, who related the details of the accident more fully than Mrs. Althea had done. This produced a proper amount of interest in kind Mrs. Kitty.

Meanwhile, a hard-favoured, but not unpleasant-looking elderly woman, with her bonnet on, entered with an armful of oak chips, rammed them into the grate, put on a few coals and cinders, kindled the chips with an old-

fashioned match, and made up a brisk fire in three minutes. Next, she cleared a little round table, spread it with a green baize, brought in the tea-tray, toast, butter, cream, and spiced-beef, and, finally, a steaming copper kettle.

"Here are some crumpets, Hannah," said Mrs. Kitty, producing a paper bag; "toast them directly, butter them plentifully, and bring them in, burning hot, with another tea-cup and saucer."

"Oh, I must not stay," said Rhoda.

"Why not?" said Mrs. Kitty. "The tea will brew while I am pulling off my riding-habit; and a cup of hot tea will send you out warm into the evening mist."

"But we dine at seven, and no one knows where I am."

"That's another matter," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Yes, go, my dear; for you ought," said Mrs. Althea. "I will not seek to detain you."

Rhoda, therefore, tied on her bonnet and drew on her gloves, but yet lingered.

"You look so snug and comfortable," said she, "that I hardly like going."

"Stay, then," said Mrs. Kitty.

"No; I must not."

"Come again, then, to-morrow—or, at any rate, when you can," said Mrs. Althea.

"I certainly will.—There! the button has come off my glove."

"Sew it on,—here are needles and thread.
Well, Kitty, have you bought a pony?"

"No; there wasn't one worth having; but Farmer Brent says he knows of a nice like nag, will suit me exactly; so I am going to see it to-morrow. Nothing doing among horses or cattle to-day. Corn-market, also, very thinly attended. Flour met a slow sale at a reduction of a shilling a sack. The demand for oats and oatmeal was limited."

"That would not affect you."

"No; barley was more in my way. Barley, both malting and grinding, very firm. There has been a trifling reaction in the grain trade. *Must* you go, Miss Hill? The crumpets will be here directly."

"Thank you, I must not stay," said Rhoda.
"Good bye, Mrs. Althea—I will call to-morrow to see how you are."

"Thank you, my dear—thank you for all your kindness."

"Oh, don't mention it!"

"Beans fully command late rates," cried Mrs. Kitty. "Feeding beans realized a slight advance. Well, if you *will* go, good-bye. The acquaintance seems oddly commenced, but we shall always be happy to see ye!"

CHAPTER IV.

Footsteps in the Snow.

Calm is all nature as a resting wheel ;
The kine are couched upon the dewy grass ;
The horse, alone, seen dimly as I pass,
Is cropping audibly his later meal.
Dark is the ground ; a slumber seems to steal
O'er vale and mountain and the starless sky.
Now, in this blank of things, a harmony
Home-felt and home-created, comes to heal.

THE evening had closed in faster than Rhoda was aware of, and she walked briskly forward, in the face of the cold moist air, and dim religious gloom of an autumnal evening, conscious of a luxurious influence imparted from without, and an unwonted glow of heat within.

“Footsteps in the snow!” thought she. “Ah! here is one at last who seems to have trodden the path I must tread, and who will lead me along.”

Meanwhile, her own footsteps over the spongy heath were as light and springing as those of a Highlander. Now and then, in her endeavours

to reach home more quickly by cutting across the common than by pursuing the devious sandy road, the uncertain light betrayed her into stepping into a rabbit-hole or tuft of prickly furze, or slipping down a bank of loose sand. Now and then, sounds and glimpses of animal life, such as had never been noted by her in broad daylight, struck her eye and ear with something wild, mysterious, and interesting. Now it was a stoat or weasel crossing her path ; now, a grey rabbit ; now, the squeak of a shrew-mouse, the call of some unknown bird, the rustle of some unseen wing. The short, sharp bark of a distant dog, the whistle of his master, the gradual forcing itself into light of some evening star, the sudden blazing up of some remote bonfire of weeds, the kindling a candle in some cottage across the heath with door set ajar that its "long levelled rule of streaming light" might guide the goodman to his home—each and all of these accessories of an autumnal evening walk across a wild common, had their intense charm for Rhoda.

The sound of a far-off clock striking seven broke the spell, and made her the subject of only a troubled joy during the remainder of her walk. She feared her absence might be taken amiss at home ; the darkness was closing round her too fast ; her quick walk became almost a run ; all pleasure in it was gone ; she panted as she posted along under the mossy

park-palings; and, when a man rode up to her and said, "Whither away so fast, Miss Rhoda?" she almost cried out.

He laughed a little, and she knew him for Mr. George Mildmay. He only said, "I won't detain you—I know you are late"—and rode on. They were close to the lodge; she ran up the avenue; saw the hall blazing with light, hastily rang for admittance; saw hot dishes on their transit from the dining-room, and fearfully and apologetically put her flushed face and long uncurled ringlets within the door without going in.

"Better late than never, Miss Rhoda," said her good-natured uncle, who was the first to see her.

"Why, Rhoda! where *have* you been?" cried Anna, sharply. "What manners!"

"I'll be down directly," said Rhoda, hurriedly; and catching up a wax-light from the hall-table, she darted up the wide shallow stairs and along the thickly-carpeted gallery to her own snug room; where, with the assistance of a good-natured lady's-maid, she succeeded in entering the dining-room in a blue silk dress, and with smooth hair, just in time for the last course.

"A new style of head-dress, Rhoda, I think," said Mr. Hill, who, nineteen times out of twenty, would not have noticed it.

"She has only put her hair in bands because

it was out of curl, papa," said Anna. "And they don't become her at all."

"Nothing is more stupid," said Charlotte, "than for several members of a family to adopt the same style of hair-dressing, or of anything else. It looks as if they had but one idea. So, if Rhoda is going to wear braids, I shall go into ringlets. What took place at the town-hall, papa?"

The details of a county meeting at Fordington left Rhoda at liberty to get through a competent share of stewed pears and custard, sponge-cake and jelly; and though, as the malicious wit said in the French coffee-house to a decayed gentleman of quality, "A jelly is but a poor sort of a dinner," young people have no objection, on sundry occasions, to resign solids for sweets.

At length Mr. Hill found leisure to inquire, "What kept you out so late, Rhoda?"

"I was walking on the common, uncle, when a man ran up to me and told me a lady was in a fit—Miss Hall of the Hill."

"Miss Hall of the Hill!" exclaimed the sisters simultaneously.

"What did you do, Rhoda? What had *you* to do with it?"

"The man—a kind of pedlar—said there seemed to be no one in the house with her; so I followed him through the garden (such a beautiful, old-fashioned garden, uncle!) into the house, where the poor lady lay upon the sofa,

quite senseless. I did what I could for her; and just as she was recovering, the servant-girl returned, from some errand apparently; and then the man went away."

"The servant-girl! So, then, they only keep one," said Anna.

"Report says they are very proud, and very poor," said Charlotte.

"Proud they are not, though rich they are not," said Rhoda.

"You speak very confidently, I think, on a very short acquaintance," said Anna.

"Because I saw so much more of them—at least, of Mrs. Althea—than I should have done in a common visit," said Rhoda.

"Mrs. Althea! who calls her Mrs. Althea?" cried Anna.

"Everybody; at least, all the poor people," interposed Charlotte. "Sometimes they say, 'the ladies of Bever Hollow.'"

"Bever Hollow is not theirs now," said Anna. "And where was the other sister?"

"Mrs. Kitty had gone to the horse-fair, to buy a pony."

Mr. Hill, as well as his daughters, burst into a hearty fit of laughter.

"And very capable she is of buying a good one," cried Mr. Hill merrily, "if report speak true."

"Oh, they say she is a regular jockey," said

Charlotte. "Quite a man in petticoats. I'm sure she looks so."

"Visited by the best county families, though," said Anna.

"Yes, because their brother was high sheriff," said Charlotte.

"Very ancient family, my dears," said Mr. Hill. "Best blood in the county."

"That's why one would like to know them," said Anna. "It was very awkward, Miss Hill's being so ill when we first came, because we couldn't call first."

"Miss Kitty might have called," said Charlotte. "But the excuse was, her sister's health prevented her making any new acquaintance."

"A very sufficient one," said Mr. Hill.

"Well, papa, people might as well be neighbourly; and I see no right a couple of old ladies have to give themselves airs, just because they can count up a squire Peregrine in the family ever since Edward the Third. Pretexts are often found for exclusiveness; but I, for one, shall not humour it or make it of any moment to me. If they like to keep themselves to themselves, let them."

"There is no harm in my going to see Mrs. Althea, however," said Rhoda, "after what has occurred. Is there, uncle?"

"Surely no," said Mr. Hill.

"No, I suppose not," said Anna reluctantly. "It's as well not to be the only family kept out

of the house, though I'm not the smallest desire to enter it. So, as Rhoda has commenced the acquaintance so oddly, she may as well take the trouble to keep it up; saying all sorts of proper things for us, of course. And now, papa, we'll leave you to take your nap."



CHAPTER V.

A Snug Fireside.

Nor unemployed her evenings passed away ;
Amusement closed, as business filled her day.

CRABBE

MRS. KITTY, after laying aside her habit and putting on her easy shoes, found the spiced beef so good and had so much news to tell, that the evening meal was considerably prolonged. She had been too lazy to fetch a cap, and was sitting "in her hair," which was rather rough, and played round a good-humoured face.

There was a ring at the gate, a knock at the house-door.

"Who can that be," says Mrs. Kitty, "at this time of night?" For the old picture-clock had just struck seven, and it was quite dark, except for the bright firelight.

Mrs. Althea looked up and saw some one, blythe, débonair, and six feet high, standing in the doorway.

"Why, George!" cried she, "can that be you?"

"Just my very own self," says George,

walking in and extending a hand to each lady at once, sitting down at the same time before the fire.

"This looks jolly," said he, "crumpets and spiced beef; what a lot you have been eating, Mrs. Kitty!"

"How do you know that, Mr. George?"

"Give me a cup of tea and I'll tell you."

"But all the strength of the tea is gone—never mind, I'll make you some fresh."

"Aye, do, there's a good soul. Well, Mrs. Althea, how have you been getting along since I saw you?"

"I have tripped and fallen against the fender, George. Don't you see this great patch? Please, don't hurt me!—it is going on very well, I believe."

"Spliced up neatly enough, ma'am; but you've been within an inch of your life, I can tell you. Our friend Kitty has strapped you up with that skill for which she is eminently distinguished."

"Quite out, George. It was done by younger and whiter hands than Kitty's."

"Can that be possible?" cried he, with mock incredulity.

"Don't say who it was," cried Mrs. Kitty, "till he tells us how he came to know I had eaten so much spiced beef."

"Mrs. Kitty, looks betray! And you look very high fed."

"Oh, nonsense! I haven't altered since the day before yesterday."

"You are becoming very rotund, ma'am—quite of a full habit."

"I wish my habit were a little fuller," said Mrs. Kitty. "I was thinking to-day whether I could not have an extra breadth put in—"

"Aye, a breadth, or a plait, or a gosset, or something; or 'twill be like a ripe gooseberry bursting."

"George! don't be coarse!"

"'Tis you, my fair friend, I am afraid will become so. Really, Miss Kitty, you must eat less, drink less, sleep less, and study more, or you will become quite obese."

"Quite a beast!" cried she, wilfully misunderstanding him. "Now you *have* done for yourself, George! Nothing shall you have but the weakest of tea and the toughest of toast."

"This crumpet is hot, and steeped lusciously in butter. The aroma of this tea is perfection."

"Well, I'm glad you are satisfied."

"And who was the young lady?"

"Aha! don't think to carry your point quite so quickly, with a few flattering words!"

"*I* flatter!"

"Yes, you."

"It was one of the Miss Wells."

"It was not."

"It was one of the Miss Ills."

"You are right, George," said Mrs. Althea. "It was the youngest—the cousin—Miss Rhoda Hill; and a very nice, pretty girl she is. Tell me all you know about her."

"No, Mrs. Althea, not till I have heard a little more about yourself. I have talked and rattled with Mrs. Kitty; and now for business."

After their little consultation, Mrs. Althea revived the former subject by saying, "Come, George, tell me all about the Hills."

"Why, ma'am, all I have to tell, you know already. They are nobodies, have no antiquity whatever, the father is a retired manufacturer, who on his wife's death (he always calls her Mrs. Ill) came to settle at the All. And he's a very good-hearted, unassuming man; but his daughters are assuming, and don't seem to have any hearts—their father would say, 'any arts.'"

"You told us there were three sisters."

"Well, how should I know? I saw three young ladies, two in blue muslin and one in pink, and they called each other by their Christian names, so of course I took them to be sisters. They have had no illness to speak of since they came, and the old gentleman seems to prefer my esteemed partner to myself, so that I have seen little of them, and that little I have not liked."

"You are too fastidious, George," said Mrs. Kitty, settling herself in her easy chair before

the fire, with her feet on the fender and Chinese screen in her hand. "Either of them would be a very good match for you; they are handsome and —"

"Thank you, Mrs. Kitty, but I prefer choosing for myself."

"And of course will choose the penniless cousin."

"There is no penniless cousin in the case. Miss Rhoda, of whom I have seen little, and who does not particularly interest me, is the owner of a few thousand pounds, I believe."

"Oh, you have found out that much of a young lady who does not interest you."

"No finding out in the case. Mr. Forest mentioned it in my hearing, but not to me. So your little romance falls to the ground. What pretty slippers those are of yours, Mrs. Kitty!"

"George," said Mrs. Kitty, immediately popping her feet out of sight, "you really are too familiar sometimes. It was the fault of your father before you."

"Ah, you never could see his merits. *I've* heard of your slipping out of the parlour on a cold night, and sewing up a little bit of every one of the button-holes of his great-coat, so as to make them just the least in the world too small for the buttons to get through them."

"Ha, ha, ha—ho, ho!" laughed Mrs. Kitty. "Yes, I remember doing it very well. He was

a nice man too, George, but fitter for Althea than me. I can't think what made him like me so."

"Why, you are as bad as little Charity Bohun," cried George, "who twists her head this way and that, looking up through her long ringlets, and says, affectedly enough for a grown young lady: 'I can't think what makes people like me so.'"

Both of the ladies laughed heartily at his mincing caricature; but Mrs. Althea said she did not think a daughter of Mr. Bohun's could be affected.

"By the bye, George," said Mrs. Kitty, "the bats come down our wide kitchen chimney and gnaw the bacon. Can you undertake to kill them?"

"I'll fire a gun up the chimney, ma'am, if you like."

"And bring down all the soot about our ears. No, thank you, I don't admire that plan of sweeping the chimney."

"Poor little wretches, it would be too hard upon them. I got very fond of a female bat once, and used to feed her upon cockchafers."

"That was humanity, I suppose."

"She used to part her hair all down her back as you part yours down the front of your head, leaving as neat a white line—*dirizzitura* the Italians call it—as possible."

"George!"

"Fact, I assure you. This elegant little creature, whose name was Noctula, was as cleanly as a lady, as playful as a kitten, and lived respected and died regretted."

"Pray, George," said Mrs. Althea, "how come we to be honoured by this visit? It is not your day."

"Well, ma'am, it is a very good way sometimes for doctors to change their day, and take their patients by surprise. Then there's no time for getting themselves up with rouge and furbelows, and what-d'ye-callums. You, Mrs. Althea, are not quite so trig as usual."

"You ironical young gentleman! Miss Rhoda Hill and Jenny Plover slipped me into this wrapper because my dress was wet through. You are too young a doctor. Good, steady Mr. Forest would never notice such things."

"Not notice! He notices *everything*, Mrs. Althea."

"He keeps his observations to himself then," said Mrs. Althea, looking rather disconcerted.

Never trust a quiet man, ma'am. It's we talkers who are to be trusted. Now, if *I* were to catch you boiling a pipkin over a parlour fire, and popping it under the sofa directly you heard me coming in, I should find some plan of letting you know it before I went away."

"But I never *do* boil a pipkin on the parlour fire."

"No, I know you don't, or the illustration

would not have been polite. Well, ladies, I have to thank you for a most agreeable hour, and am sorry I must go; but—the way is long, the wind is cold, though the party is neither infirm nor old. Should you turn a little faintish, Mrs. Althea, between this and bedtime, take a dose of your cordial—”

“ But I have just had one, George ! ”

“ Hey ? ”

“ You have been a cordial to me, as you always are.”

“ Thank 'e, Mrs. Althea, you are always kind, though Kitty does snap me up. You shall see the old gentleman next time.”

“ But I really like you the best, except when I am seriously worse.”

“ He's ten times cleverer than me, ma'am, if he a'n't so pleasant.”

“ Nay, he's *very* pleasant, George.”

“ Oh well, there's no accounting for tastes. Good night! good night!”

CHAPTER VI.

Mr. George's Reveries.

The domestic affections make the bed of sickness almost a luxury ; they impart a healthy atmosphere to home ; they obscure from all men the miseries of life ; and they cast a halo of cheerfulness around the daily toil whereby the poor man's family is supported.—*GLEN'S Prize Essay on the Influence of the Mind over the Body.*

"I OFTEN wonder," thinks the genial, heart-whole young man to himself, as he rides homewards, "what sort of liking Mrs. Althea had in early days for my poor father; and what perversity induced him to prefer Mrs. Kitty. Well, some people prefer Forest to me. And Kitty *has* a nice smile, and her nose is not bad, and her complexion ~~may~~ have been pretty, and she has pretty hair even now, though to-night it was all in a frizz; but, she never could have been a shrimp!"

"Then, her manners. That woman understands the points of a horse as well as I do, and market prices far better, and what manures are best for land, and all about drain-tiles, and pasture, and crops, and drenches for horses, and warm mashes for cows, and how to fatten

poultry, pigs, and calves; but as for *reading*,—the county paper is enough for her, except a few novels. Stay, I am forgetting that the Bible is well studied by both.

“Mrs. Althea is, perhaps, a trifle too blue. Yet no, I will not find a fault in the dear old girl. Books are her ‘*animi pabulum*,’ and ‘*animi medicina*’ too; they quiet her pulse, amuse her in the absence of pain, and soothe her under it. What a fine thing a love of reading is, to be sure! for one’s friends, as well as one’s self. Here now, when Mrs. Althea and I get together by ourselves, we can gossip by the hour about ‘*Isaac Walton*,’ and ‘*Don Quixote*,’ and the ‘*Vicar of Wakefield*,’ and ‘*Boswell’s Johnson*,’ and the ‘*Mysteries of Udolpho*.’ Many a book has she induced me to read; many a thought I owe to her; many a nice note has she written me. I fancy neither of the good old girls like me the worse, the one for having had a *tendresse* for my pater, the other for my pater having had a tenderness for *her*.”

Mr. George’s reflections then took a different course, with which it is not our province to intermeddle. Let us hope he reached Fordington safely, had a good supper, and an unbroken night’s rest.

Rhoda awoke in a very cheerful mood the next morning, and, as bright as the October sunshine, was able to take unaffected interest in her

uncle's remarks about his gun and shooting-pony, in Anna's suspense about the arrival of her new shawl, and Charlotte's anticipation of pleasure in making a round of morning visits. As cheerfulness, when not ill-timed, is very communicative, Rhoda's imparted itself to the rest; and she was even wished a pleasant walk to the Hill-house Farm in a tone of cordiality.

It was one of those lovely, fresh, genial autumn days when even an old, worn heart rejoices in its life; much more, then, a young one. As Rhoda pursued her way with a light, springing step, first along a sandy lane and then across the heath, there seemed some new beauty in everything she looked upon; especially in the wild flowers and herbs she often stopped to gather and examine. Now, it was the Artemisia, with its smooth green leaves and whitish flowers; now the bright yellow stars of that village heal-all, the elecampane. The crowded clusters of the golden-rod reminded her that formerly this plant was highly valued for its medicinal qualities, and brought from foreign countries at great expense, till, being discovered wild in our own woods, it fell into contempt. "How often this is the case with us in greater and better things!" thought she. "We value a book, a picture, a cast, till a cheap edition of the book comes out, the picture is engraved and seen in the print-shops, the cast is multiplied, and hawked all over the

country by little Italian boys; then we call it hackneyed, and condemn it, though its beauty is the same."

Rhoda thought Mrs. Althea was just the person to be fond of wild flowers; and she gathered for her a handful of what her cousins would have called sad rubbish; now stretching across a little pool for "Job's tears," now tugging at a pretty little spray of heath, and at length, to her great joy, espousing a treasure that would crown all, because of its appropriate name, "*Althea officinalis*." Perhaps it was because she had a bit of mugwort in her nose-gay that she was so little tired by her walk, for in olden times it was believed that travellers and wayfarers who bore a branch of it were unconscious of fatigue.

A change came over the spirit of her meditations when she reached a little knoll, which brought her immediately in sight of the Hill-house, at the gate of which were an open carriage and two saddle-horses. The friendships of young people are often of as rapid growth as Jonah's gourd; and, when they find they are not quite so vividly reciprocated, or when any obstacle to their enjoyment intervenes, they are apt to be unreasonably disappointed. Thus, Rhoda had been anticipating a thousand pleasant things that were to pass between her new friend and herself; but directly she had reason to think her pre-engaged

by some other acquaintance her heart fell, and she began to fear she should only be in the way.

Now, it would often happen that days and weeks passed without the advent of a visitor to enliven the seclusion of Mrs. Althea; and at other times, some provoking chance would bring several visitors together, each of whom would have been acceptable separately, but whose united effect produced fatigue approaching to exhaustion.

Thus it happened that when Rhoda entered Mrs. Althea's parlour, she found her surrounded by the county member's lady and daughters, while Mrs. Kitty, in her best green silk, which, like all her dresses, was too tight and too short, was entertaining Miss Roberta Rickards, whose strong, loud voice had invariably the effect of raising the pitch of all other voices but Mrs. Althea's, as if in rivalry of her own.

Rhoda immediately felt herself one too many; and though Mrs. Kitty's reception was hearty, and Mrs. Althea's eyes spoke the kindest welcome, she sat on thorns throughout the visit; and at length, dismayed at Miss Rickards' declaring she would dismiss her groom and horses to the stables and spend the day with her old friends, she rose and took leave, which she thought Mrs. Althea's jaded look rendered but common humanity. She had left her wild flowers on the hill side; and when

she reached the spot on her return, they had lost their beauty and freshness. She pursued her way, feeling dull enough; and seeking refuge in that poor consolation, "Ah well, it is my fate! It is just so, always, with whatever I set my heart upon." Her little effort at improving an attractive acquaintance had fallen quite flat: Mrs. Althea had led her to suppose that she would be hailed like sunshine in her shady room; whereas the case proved quite different, and she found her surrounded by some of the highest people in the neighbourhood, who seemed to be on the footing of attached friends, and to value the privilege of being admitted.

All this while, poor Mrs. Althea was rather piteously endeavouring to make her inflictions blessings. Though the Harford family were gone, Miss Roberta Rickards remained, the very tone of whose voice affected her nerves and made her feel irritable. And be it known, that an irritable temper was one of poor Mrs. Althea's characteristic blemishes, though curbed by divine grace. But, were not all these small trials allotted to her for correction of that very infirmity? If they had been increased tenfold, should she dream of murmuring? Why, then, when they were only minor grievances? If they troubled her to-day, she knew she should be able to laugh at them to-morrow.

So she fought her hard little battle with

herself, and conquered. How? some invalid may perhaps ask. Well—she first darted up a little ejaculation for self-victory; then, while Miss Roberta had retired to arrange her dress, she lay quite prone on her sofa, for a little while, practising that difficult art of *not thinking*. Thirdly, she followed Sydney Smith's advice, thought of something agreeable, and ate a sweetmeat; so that when Miss Rickards returned to the room, she was able to lie quietly knitting and listening to her gossip with Kitty about old friends and new acquaintance. The waning light at length reminded the fair equestrian that the days were shortening, and she had a long ride before her. Mrs. Althea, for once, felt grateful for the short days.

As soon as Mrs. Kitty had sped the parting guest, she hastily exchanged the green gown for the brown one, and was soon heard uttering the voice of command in the dairy. Just as the parlour was becoming dark, she briskly re-entered it, gave the fire a rousing stir, which suddenly produced a cheerful blaze, snapped the window-fastenings, dragged the curtains across the windows with a jarring clang of the rings along the rods, pulled her easy chair forward, threw herself into it, and placed her feet on the fender without any fear of George Mildmay.

" Roberta's a famous companion," said she, " and does you a world of good; but she ter-

ribly cut up my afternoon's work. However, things have turned out better than might have been expected—six-and-twenty beautiful pats of butter, the pans scalded, and the cream set for the night. What do you think Roberta has brought you?"

"I cannot imagine."

"A bottle of real Anstruch Tokay, that used to be worth a guinea a bottle! sweet and rich to the last degree! that's what I call real kindness; for she has only two left."

"It is; *very* kind; whether I like the Tokay or not."

"Oh, my dear, you're sure to like it. Where's my slate? The herb-man will be here tomorrow."

And, setting to work with slate and slate-pencil, Mrs. Kitty began to calculate how much the herbalist owed them for lavender and rosemary.

"That's your perquisite, Althea: 'twas your idea to grow them."

"No, Kitty, I really cannot take it, for you have had all the trouble."

"'Tis yours, I say, ma'am! Haven't I the honey?"

"Oh, very well, I'll take it and be thankful. Four pounds, seventeen shillings! How much good may be done with it, to be sure!"

And the evening sped pleasantly with the sisters, as they in imagination distributed the profits of their herbs and their honey.

CHAPTER VII.

The Farm-yard Awake.

When strayed her lambs where gorse and greenweed grow,
When rose her grass, in richer vales below,
When pleased she looked on all the smiling land,
And viewed the hinds who toiled at her command,
While Bridget churned the butter close at hand,
Geese, hens, and turkeys following where she went,
Then, dread o'ercame her—that her day was spent.

CRAEDE.

WHEN Rhoda next called at the Hill-house, she found the farmyard alive, and as different from its former self as Sleeping Beauty from Beauty awake. Labourers were in the barn, the stable, the yard; boys riding cart-horses to water, geese noisily streaming along the broad margin of turf, turkeys gobbling, hens and pigeons picking up grains, and Mrs. Kitty trudging hither and thither on pattens, much too occupied to be spoken to except on business.

Rhoda found Mrs. Althea on her sofa, quite as busy as Mrs. Kitty in the farmyard: cutting out papers for patchwork, piecing fragments into spencers and tippets, contriving list gloves,

and in various ways converting the useless into the useful.

"Oh, how I should like to help you!" cried Rhoda. "Can I?"

"Certainly. I have placed these pieces to form a *tippet*: you can join them; and then add a strong, clean, though not new lining."

"What nice *list gloves* you are making."

"I hope to give them to Mr. Bohun, when he comes to read prayers, this evening. He is kind enough always to come to me on Wednesdays."

"Is he your clergyman?"

"Yes, and a very good one."

"We have a very poor one at Fordington church; but my uncle likes him pretty well. I should like to hear your Mr. Bohun."

"Will you join us this evening?"

"I fear I cannot—"

"Do not think of it, then. There are many things we should like to do, but cannot."

"Ah! how many!"

"For instance, I should like a walk over the heath, to admire the gorse and furze, and to look at the cricketers, and talk to the cottagers who live around it,—hear who is well and who is ill, how such a girl likes her place, and how such a boy gets on at sea,—know what they want and what they are doing, hoping, and fearing. If I could not help them much with money, I might at least cheer them by my sympathy."

"Something like that, I might do."

"Certainly you might."

"The worst is, I feel so awkward—"

"You would soon get over that."

Here Mrs. Kitty entered, looking very important, and carrying a small tray, on which were a cobwebbed bottle, a corkscrew, a wine-glass, and a thin slice of crisp toast in an old-fashioned plate of rare china, with gold, crimped edges. Having set down her tray, she greeted Rhoda, and then—

"Now, Althea," said she, "you are going to have a glass of Tokay."

"No, I am not, Kitty, unless you have one too."

"Nonsense; I am not going to touch it. I never care about such things."

"Nor do I."

"But it will strengthen you, and do you good. Come, don't be childish, but take the good things that come to your share."

"Well, you know I really am not fond of wine, and don't require it; but this was sent so kindly—stop, that's enough! only half a glass: remember, it is a liqueur."

"Well, and is not this a liqueur-glass?" said Mrs. Kitty, examining the beverage with the air of a connoisseur. "Now then, madam. Well, what do you think of it?"

"Do you call this rich and sweet to the last degree?" said Mrs. Althea, after a cautious sip.

"Why, don't you?"

"Taste it, Kitty."

"What's the matter with it?" said Mrs. Kitty, looking half affronted as she took the glass. Then, after swallowing a little of its contents, she made a horribly wry face.

"Whatever can this be?" cried she.

"Not Tokay, I presume," said Mrs. Althea, laughing.

"Why, it's worse than the sourest small beer! One of Roberta's blunders," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Well, I am glad you admit it to be one, instead of insisting on my drinking it," said Mrs. Althea.

"But, whatever could she have been thinking of?"

"Of doing a kind thing, we may be quite sure; so do not let us say anything about it."

"I certainly shall name it to her the very first opportunity; or she will send some of the stuff to another invalid."

"She has but two bottles left, and I don't think any one will drink enough to be hurtful."

Mrs. Kitty sat down and enjoyed a hearty laugh. "She's a good creature, too," said she; "one of the best creatures in the world, though eccentric. But fie on it! here comes the farrier; I must run off to say a word to him, for I think Dobbin's malingering."

And she capered away as lightly as a girl of sixteen.

"What is malingering?" said Rhoda.

"Shamming ill to escape work," said Mrs. Althea, laughing.

"How active Mrs. Kitty is!" said Rhoda, with wonder rather than admiration.

"Ah, Kitty was young and very pretty once," said Mrs. Althea; "and when she darts about the house in that youthful way, it puts me so in mind of old times that I am ready to fancy her young and pretty still. But she has gone through a great deal. And now she kills useless regrets by being incessantly and beneficially employed. Few know how much there is in Kitty, though she is universally liked and respected. Did you ever see Bever Hollow?"

"No! what's that?" said Rhoda, surprised at what seemed an abrupt transition.

"The place where we were born and brought up—an old manor-house, partly like what the Scotch borderers used to call a *peel*: that is, a tower of defence. It was not in a good defensive position, however, though surrounded by a moat. A kind of embattled farm-house had been built on to the tower; chiefly of grey stone, hard as adamant, but partly of that old, time-worn red brick, discoloured and faded in course of years, which at length becomes mottled with grey, green, white, black, yellow, every colour, in short, *except* red—and is then

the most picturesque of building materials, especially when crumbled here and there by the tooth of time, and overgrown with moss, ivy, snap-dragon, wall-flower, and stone-crop. So it is, or was, with Bever Hollow; *View Hollow* my father loved to call it, and truly there was a lovely view from it; hence its name—Bever, evidently corrupted from Beau-voir."

"How sorry you must have been to leave such a place."

"No, my love; I was very glad."

"Glad! why?"

"Ah, it's a sad story," said Mrs. Althea, with a tear in her eye.

"Oh, then I will not ask," said Rhoda, who was just of the age to love sad stories.

"There is no reason, my dear, why you should not know. We were of ancient, but very decayed gentility—my father loved to feel himself connected with the past, and to keep up everything he could that belonged to it. This led, perhaps, to some absurdities, forgiven by the good-natured, and laughed at by the unkind. What was worse, it led him into many extravagancies. He loved my brother Peregrine to idolatry, as his only son, and the representative of his house: to put him in that position, and enable him to make that figure which he desired, he pinched himself and us. My mother, who had a large, comprehensive mind, often warned him he would ruin his

'darling son ; and in the end he did. Peregrine was, to use an old phrase, 'lovely in countenance, and of most sweet conditions.' His natural disposition was affectionate and amiable, but it gradually became spoilt by indulgence. As a little fellow, he was extraordinarily generous and self-denying, and would accumulate his pocket-money to relieve a poor person, or give a present to one of us ; but too soon he became prodigal in his own pleasures, and destitute of means to contribute to those of others. Losing the means, he lost the inclination, as he became more and more selfish. His college bills nearly reduced us to penury, but he did not distinguish himself. On the contrary, he was the companion of those who only cared for boating, riding, driving, hunting, and drinking ; who were shunned by the truly great and good. My mother, whose letters and universal conduct to him would have redeemed him if anything could, was at length reduced to despair. She then applied herself to the practice of an almost niggardly economy, to pay our necessary expenses. We kept no company ; our lives were considered intolerably dull by our acquaintance, but they were not, though they were very unhappy. Sometimes Kitty suffered most, sometimes I did ; but my mother most of all."

"What a sad story."

"She sickened of her fatal illness, which lasted ten years. Kitty and I might have

married, my love, during that time, but we would not. Indeed,—but no; there's no need to say that. Meantime, Peregrine married an heiress, and might have begun a better course, if he had had resolution: in fact, my mother's death-bed entreaties made him attempt it, but not for long. He stood for the county, but was ousted. My father took his defeat greatly to heart, more than the expense, more than even my mother's death. However, he was afterwards gratified by my brother's being county sheriff. As Peregrine's manners were very captivating, he was almost as popular as George Evelyn of Wotton. But his wife died; then his only son; he drowned care by returning to his old courses, and broke his neck by riding into a lime-pit, coming home from a convivial party."

"Dear Mrs. Althea, don't say any more!—you are agitating yourself too much."

"My dear, there is little more to tell. . . . My father's faculties received a shock which they never recovered; he became quite unfit to manage his affairs, and yet did not like to give them up to us, so that they grew more and more involved. At length, after languishing through years of illness, and sorrow for his son, my poor father died. Kitty and I were no longer young; we feared to find ourselves destitute; however, by giving up the house, selling a few good pictures and some massy

old plate, we proved not only able to pay all, but possessed of a small sum of ready money."

"How people must have respected you!"

"My love, their kindness far exceeded our desert.. After revolving the few plans of life remaining to us, we embarked our all in this farm, and have lived on it ever since."

"It was a hazardous undertaking."

"It was. However, we have done well; chiefly through Kitty's energy. She has managed the farm admirably. Many voices warned us against the experiment, but we stuffed our ears with cotton, like the Princess Parizade, and did not mind what they said. My dear, I begin to feel I have talked rather too much. Will you read to me? George Withers' poems are on the table. There are some lines of his I particularly admire—

'My cares are blessed thistles unto me,
Which wholesome are, although they bitter be,
And though their leaves with pricks are overgrown
(Which pain me), yet their flowers are full of down.'"

As Rhoda rose for the book, her eye glanced at one or two rather rueful portraits suspended between the bookcases.

"Are you looking for Peregrine?" said Mrs. Althea. "Ah, you won't find him there. That young gentleman fondling a dog, and dressed in a scarlet gown with that extraordinary piece of green drapery appended to it,

is my uncle Peregrine. That lady in sky-blue and yellow, with white beads in her hair, is not my mother, but her grandmother. Peregrine is among the miniatures."

"He has a very engaging face," said Rhoda, when she had found his likeness.

"Ah, he *was* engaging," said Mrs. Althea, sighing. "And there's Kitty, though I dare say you hardly recognise her."

It was a good-humoured, blooming, Hebe face; though under the disadvantage of a dress out of date.

"This is you, I am sure, Mrs. Althea!" cried Rhoda, looking complacently at a very pleasant portrait.

"*Me!* Oh, no, my dear! My great-aunt Bridget."

CHAPTER VIII.

The De Bones.

A good man was there of religion,
 That was a pauvre parson of a town,
 But rich he was in holy thought and work !
 He also was a learned man, a cleric
 That Christ his gospel truslie did preach ;
 His parishioners devoutly he did teach.
 Benign he was, and wondrous diligent,
 And in adversity full patient.
 Wide was his parish—the houses far asunder ;
 But these he shunned not, nor for rain nor thunder,
 In sickness or in trouble, to visite,
 The farthest in his parish, great and litt',
 Upon his feet ; and in his hand a staff,
 A noble example to his sheep he gaff !

CHAUCER. *Canterbury Tales.*

OF the Reverend Launcelot Bohun, curate of Collington, it might almost literally be said—

A man he was to all the country dear,
 And passing rich with forty pounds a year.

For forty, read eighty. On this stipend, he, the descendant of that Hugh Bohun whom good old Sir Richard Baker calls Hugh De Bones, had religiously and respectably reared ten thriving children; and not on potatoes and apple-dumplings. For, did he not kill his own

mutton, and salt his own pork, and breed his own poultry, and catch his own trout, and grind his own corn, and grow his own leeks, parsnips, turnips, carrots, and pot-herbs ; besides killing a cow every Christmas ? So that, though potatoes and apple-dumplings were neither unknown nor despised by the young De Bones, these wholesome, homely dishes had not to withstand alone the hungry onslaught of ten young healthy appetites. Besides, though the Reverend Launcelot did not shoot his own game, many a thumping basket of hares, pheasants, and, now and then, a quarter of doe-venison, found their way to him from the Squire, accompanied, about Christmas-tide, by a drum of figs, a box of raisins, a loaf of sugar, and half-a-dozen pounds of tea, from the Squire's lady. And though it is more blessed to give than to receive, yet he—who never spent an idle moment or an idle penny, who never sent a poor vagrant from his door without a halfpenny and a slice of bread, and who, like Robert Walker, dressed all his fresh meat for the week on the Sabbath, that as many of those who came from afar as chose to partake of his bounty, might dine in his kitchen on the broth—deserved to enjoy, and did enjoy both sorts of blessedness. As there are always those who will find a sable lining to the purest silver cloud and turn it wrong side outwards, some one was actually heard to say that Mr. Bohun,

for as good as he seemed, gave Sunday dinner-parties. "Yes, madam," replied one of the company (Mr. Forest, in fact), "but they are such parties as our Redeemer commanded us to assemble when we make a feast;—the blind, the maimed, the halt; of whom He said:—'they cannot recompense thee, but thou shalt be compensated at the resurrection of the just.'"

Now, Mr. Bohun, faring so sumptuously every day, could not be expected to afford very extravagant tailors' bills. Indeed, all his habiliments, save one sacred suit for Sundays, were of home-manufacture, and, in part, the production of his own herds and flocks. For the hide of the Christmas cow was tanned into leather for the shoes of all his house, and the good man might commonly be seen in a parson's grey suit of his wife's tailoring, a shirt of his daughters' making, stockings of his daughters' knitting, and a straw hat of his daughters' plaiting.

If he were not much indebted to art for his appearance (though, in truth, everything became him), he was under considerable obligations to nature. A finer-made person of nobler bearing did not exist in the country. He stepped like a king, and carried his head like one; he might have sat, any day, for the model of King David or King Solomon. His dark, keen eye was both piercing and pleasant. his nose aquiline, his hair coal-black,

his complexion nut-brown and healthy; his smile,

Il lampeggiar dell' angelico riso,

like sudden sunlight over a beautiful country; his laugh, musical and mirthful; his frown, awful; his voice a perfect instrument, managed with excellent skill.

This was the man who married Pamela Watts without a halfpenny, and brought her merrily home to the parsonage-house, of which the incumbent, being non-resident, allowed him the gratuitous occupation. It was a long, low, one-storied house, of a faded red brick, with stone dressings, and with large attic-windows in the deep, many-gabled, golden-mossed roof. Birds built under the eaves; a pear-tree, nailed against the wall, covered one end of the house; a vine, that produced excellent black grapes, ran over the front. The curate was famous for his grape and elderberry wine. Beyond this, his cellar boasted no fermented liquors, for he and his family were water-drinkers. Over his hospitable hearth was graven—

“ Eat the fat and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared.”

Over his stable, “ Where no cattle are, the crib is clean; but much increase is by the strength of the ox.” Over the shed that covered his plough and harrow, “ He that

tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread." On the wall facing his servant's bed, "Love not sleep, lest thou come to poverty." Over the wood-house, "Where no wood is, the fire goeth out; so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth." In the dairy, "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter; so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife." On his cellar door, "Give strong drink to him that is ready to perish; and wine unto those that be of heavy hearts." And in his wife's closet, Solomon's virtuous woman at full length.

Mr. Bohun, on baptising his fourth son, was heard to say that, had he known he was going to have so many, he would have named them after the four Evangelists. However, he at length numbered six, and their profane, not sacred names seemed taken out of the History of England. They were Fulk, Geoffrey, Hugh, Ralph, Humphrey, and Roger. The girls were Pamela, Prudence, Patience, and Charity. These three last names their mother and brothers abridged, much against Mr. Bohun's will, into Prue, Patty, and Cherry.

It was this good man whom Mrs. Althea was expecting to see, on hearing the house-bell ring, a little before six on Wednesday afternoon.

Instead of whom, she beheld a lad or strippling of blooming, beautiful face and most sweet and honest expression, fit to remind one of the youngest son of Jesse before the Lord

took him from the sheep-folds to rule his people Israel. He had a little rushen basket in his hand containing a trout about half a yard long

"Why, Fulk, is it you?" cried Mrs. Althea. "I have not seen you, my dear boy, this many a day."

"More's my loss," said Fulk, kissing her; "I thought I would not come empty-handed. I said to mammy, 'I'll catch a trout;' and I did. Isn't he a regular beauty? This old fellow has wasted me many a half-hour; but I don't count them wasted now I have him at last. He lived in a little cave the size of my hat, under an old grey oak that overhangs the stream, just like the oak that gave way under poor Ophelia and toppled her into the water. There lived my gentleman; I could see him, and I fancy he could see me, for he was as shy of me as possible. I kept tempting him and coaxing him with everything that was good, and flattering him with, 'Sir, you're a royal dish—you are intended for. Mrs. Althea;' but no, he was as deep as the sea! However, the shyest fish are caught at last."

"He really is a beauty, Fulk!"

"Isn't he? I'll go and lay him on the larder-stones, and be back directly."

Off he went; and when he returned, Mrs. Althea said with a smile, "You know your way about the premises."

"Haven't I a right to? How often, when I was that high, have I trotted after you and

Mrs. Kitty to larder, safe, and dairy! Ah, and slept in a nice little crib in your bedroom, too, Mrs. Althea! Well, I glanced just now into the dairy, and there's Mrs. Kitty skimming the cream off a dozen leads, so we're safe for the next half-hour, are not we?"

"Safe, you funny boy, yes!" said Mrs. Althea, amused at his quick, eager look.

"Then I'll seize the occasion," said he, shutting the door alertly, and then throwing himself on the rug, with his arm on her sofa. "I have some very serious things to talk to you about, Mrs. Althea."

"Have you? Then I to hear them will seriously incline."

"That's just what I want. You will advise me, help me, or console me. My father wants me to go to St. Bees. But I don't like the thought of St. Bees; I can't bear St. Bees."

"How few sons, Fulk, *can* bear what their fathers propose for them!"

"Ah, but this is not in the spirit of opposition—how should it be? But it will affect my whole future life. I shall never be looked upon as if I had graduated at Oxford or Cambridge. My father himself is an Oxford man, and I want to tread in the footsteps of my father."

"You and I know very well, Fulk, what must be his only motive for not sending you there—necessity."

"Well, but if I were to get a scholarship that

led to a fellowship, as I'm pretty sure I should —for oh, I would work so hard!—I'd rather be a doorkeeper in the—I'd rather be a servitor, or a commoner, or a janitor in the halls of Oxford, than dwell in the tents of St. Bees!"

"I know you think you would, though you are talking at random, and though you would be unable to help feeling the servile position you are contemplating very uncomfortable."

"Not a bit! some of our greatest men have gone through their studies that way! I shouldn't mind blacking the shoes of another man, or brushing his coat, in the least! I should make a pleasantry of it. Besides, my godfather, the Squire, would, I fancy, give me a lift if he were asked."

"Would *you* like to ask him?"

"Why, yes, I should not so very much mind it, I think. But, might not dear daddy?"

"Nay, Fulk! how can you expect your father to ask a favour he does not wish for, of a person you hesitate to ask a favour you *do* wish for?"

"Hum!"

"Have you asked your father to ask?"

"No; I wish *you* would, Mrs. Althea."

"I should hardly dare to propose his altering *any* scheme for the welfare of his children that his excellent judgment may have formed."

"Here he is!" cried Fulk, leaping up and looking from the window. "No, he isn't."

And, returning to his place, "Come," said he, "we will dismiss trouble number one for number two. I will say no more just now about St. Bees. The next thing that disturbs me is about Pamela."

"Pamela! She is not ill, I hope!"

"Well, I don't know what to think of it. She mopes and droops a good deal. My mother is giving her bark, but I don't think that's any use. She wants change."

"This would be a poor change from your merry house, or I would say Let her come here."

"Oh, it would not be a poor change at all, Mrs. Althea! In the first place, you know, there would be change of scene and change of faces; then, you have far more society than we have."

"Why, Fulk! sometimes no one comes near us for weeks!"

"Well, then, there are yourselves, ma'am; and you know how infatuated we are with you and Mrs. Kitty. We think, there's no finer company. We envy the maid that waits on you at table. We know beforehand we shall like everything you say, and, when said, we treasure it and repeat it. So there's for you. Besides, to any one who loves books, what treasures there are in this room! Turn Pamela or me into it, we could be content to be snowed up for weeks. Then there are your picture-

books, and your curiosity-drawers, and your old stories when you sit by the fire."

" Well, Fulk, if any or all of these things have any attraction for Pamela, she shall certainly come, if your father and mother will let her."

" Thank you, Mrs. Althea. Then there's Hugh."

" Well, what is the matter with Hugh?"

" He has a stye in his eye."

" I should think," said Mrs. Althea, laughing, " a chemist's apprentice might cure that for himself."

" Why, I should have thought so too," said Fulk, joining in the laugh; " however, it is very aggravating to poor Hugh, because he has borrowed ' Ivanhoe ' and can't read one word of it. Moreover, he says the customers laugh at him; and the draught in the shop makes it worse."

" Tell him to foment it well with warm water and a soft handkerchief; and when it is dispersed, to keep it from returning by using cold salt and water continually."

" Thank you! I was sure you knew of something. Poor Hugh! he says he'd rather be loblolly-boy to George Mildmay than apprentice to old Binkes."

" Ambition again. Oh you boys, you boys!"

" Nay, dear Mrs. Althea, is there any harm in a little ambition?"

"There is great harm, Fulk, in discontent."

"Ah, we're not come to that yet!"

"How is Geoffrey?"

"No discontent in that quarter, Mrs. Althea.

Busy as a bee, and merry as a cricket. He says, if he had only a little more time to write verses, he wouldn't mind being an usher at a grammar-school all his life!"

"Go ~~to~~ Geoffrey!"

"Well, I think that's being a little *too* unambitious. Besides, he could never marry."

"Could you, if you had only a fellowship?"

"Well, that's a con-si-de-ra-tion," said Fulk, looking very grave about it; so grave that Mrs. Althea smiled.

"Time enough before that need trouble you," said she.

"I don't know that," said Fulk, shaking his head. "There's a young lady somewhere about here, pretty enough to be queen of the fairies—however, I won't tell you about that, for you will only laugh at me."

"Perhaps I might take that liberty. Blue-eyed, is she, Fulk, with long, nut-brown, curling hair?"

"Yes! Who *is* she? Do say."

But Mrs. Althea only laughed, and said, "How can I tell?"

"It was only fancy's sketch, then?" said Fulk, disappointed. "But here *is* daddy, this time."

"Hallo, Fulk! you here?" said his cheerful

father, coming in with a great folio under his arm, which he unceremoniously relieved himself of by handing it to his son. Having greeted Mrs. Althea in the most cordial manner, he stood before the fire, face to face with Fulk, surveying him with no small contention.

"He believes he knows everything in that boy's heart, . . . and yet he does not," thought Mrs. Althea.

"Fulk, your hair wants cutting," said Mr. Bohun, suddenly. "Remember Absalom. Your locks are quite bushy."

"Yes, father, but my mother really shears us too close now; so I thought I would give Tresham a turn the next time I went into town, hey, father?"

"Tresham a turn, indeed!" said Mr. Bohun, with infinite contempt; "Tresham will be immensely obliged to you for your patronage. Sixpence a quarter: for I suppose you won't want trimming oftener than once in three months—Absalom only polled his hair once a year."

"Well, at any rate, it won't ruin you, father."

"No, my boy; only when it comes to be multiplied by —, but give Tresham a benefit, by all means if you will; only don't get buying perfumery."

"Certainly not—thank you, papa—father, I mean."

"We are growing very manly, now," said Mr. Bohun, smiling at Mrs. Althea. "And this young fellow, who cannot submit his head to the maternal scissars, thinks he could be a sizar at Oxford. But what make you from Wittemburg, Fulk?"

"Father," said the lad, very ingenuously, "I came over here to talk about St. Bees with Mrs. Althea, and see if she could not come over to my way of thinking, or else convert me to hers."

"That's my honest boy. Talk it over, and welcome; but consider Oxford quite out of your reach."

"Why, father? why?"

"Why, my boy? Because of pounds shillings and pence."

"Father," said Fulk, "I have seen the college bills of Tom Slater, who was a sizar of St. John's, and I saw with my own eyes that the necessary expenses need not be more than 12*l.* or 15*l.* a year."

"Pooh, pooh, Fulk."

"He was at college three years, father! He arrived with only 10*l.* in his pocket, and had no friends, or income, or emolument whatever, except the profits of his sizarship. He said it is only men's extravagance that makes college life so expensive. He has his dinners and suppers for nothing, and if he gives up tea, and breakfasts on bread and milk, he spends next to nothing on his board. The supper-bell rings at

a quarter to nine, and they don't rise from dinner till half-past three, so that one may very well give up his cup of tea. Indeed, I'll give up mine at home, henceforth, if you like it, father."

"Well, Fulk, there will be some sense in that, because you can find how you like it."

"Furniture for my rooms I should want, but not much. Henry Kirke White's only cost him 15*l.* Only think, father, of Kirke White! A butcher's son! carrying out the basket! promoted, as a great favour, to be serving-boy to a hosier."

"Aye, Fulk!—he died at twenty-one!"

"Leaving a name, though, father, that will never die!—hey?"

"You are right."

"The worst of it," pursued Fulk, in a melancholy tone, "is about the gyps. Kirke White's gyp stole a sack of coals a week, and used to steal two candles out of every pound, six to the pound. As for tea, sugar, and pocket-handkerchiefs, they were his regular prey. I wonder whether I couldn't do without a gyp. I could do without tea and sugar, but I couldn't do without coals.—Oh, but I might have a padlock!"

"And you might carry your pocket-handkerchiefs about you," said his father, laughing.

"No, papa, not a whole dozen. Oh, dear! but I had nearly forgotten Samuel Wesley—

the father of the famous Wesley, you know. He walked to Oxford, entered himself at Exeter College as a poor scholar, and began his studies there with no larger a fund than two pounds sixteen shillings. Yet, by great frugality, he not only supported himself, but when he went to London to be ordained, he had accumulated ten pounds fifteen shillings!"

"Here comes Mrs. Kitty," said Mr. Bohun, "the harbinger of tea with all its goodly concomitants. (*Accumulated, quotha!*)"

"How did you like your heavy book, Mr. Bohun?" said Mrs. Kitty.

"Better to read than to carry, Mrs. Kitty. There's a body of sound divinity in Jackson."

"A little soul wanting, though, I think," said Mrs. Althea.

"I don't admit that," said Mr. Bohun; "but his sentences are too long for ladies. The great Hooker —"

"Hooker went to London on foot," cried Fulk; "and the horse that Bishop Jewel gave him for his journey was a walking-stick. Father, you might afford me such an equipage as that!"

"I might, Fulk. I was going to say that even Hooker, if his fame were not his usher, would be thought heavy, now. Even Dr. Johnson —"

"Johnson and Garrick went up to London with a shilling in their pockets," said Fulk.

"Just enough for one day's dinner," said Mr. Bohun. "Even Johnson's sense and wit are barely enough to carry down his sesquipedalian words."

"O, father! do you call Johnson *witty*?"

"I do, indeed, Fulk."

"Well, I do think Rasselas and the Rambler as heavy as lead!"

"But not his talk in Boswell."

"That must be Boswell's merit, then," murmured Fulk, helping himself temperately to marmalade.

"What *is* wit?" said Mrs. Kitty.

"I heard Sydney Smith, who ought to know something about it," said Mr. Bohun, "define it as the ready power of finding likenesses in things apparently dissimilar. Whereas judgment is shown in detecting distinctions in things apparently similar."

"Capital," said Mrs. Althea.

"*Ex. gra.*—" said Mr. Bohun, turning suddenly on his son.

"Pope and the note of interrogation," said Fulk, readily.

"Good," said Mrs. Althea.

"Now for the other," said his father.

"Dr. Johnson generally expresses sound sense in polysyllabic words," said Fulk, after a moment's pause. "His imitators generally express poor sense in words equally grandiloquent."

"Very fair, my boy."

"You were later here than usual, this evening, Mr. Bohun," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Because I came round by Bever Hollow."

"Ah, dear old View Hollow!" cried Mrs Althea.

"And not only came round by it, but called there, and sat some time with old Mrs. Glyn."

"How did the dear old place look?"

"Very well indeed; well kept up, and in good though plain style. Mrs. Glyn thinks her two little grand-daughters are getting rather too wild, and in want of a governess. I immediately thought of Pamela."

"Oh, father!" cried Fulk, remonstratingly.

"Yes, Fulk, the situation is not an arduous one, and would be an excellent beginning for her. It is what she must come to when I die——"

"Unless she marries," suggested Mrs. Althea.

"Which so pretty a girl is sure to do," added Mrs. Kitty.

"Pretty girls do not always marry, Mrs. Kitty."

"We boys could work for her," cried Fulk.

"You boys will have to work for yourselves, my lad."

"Yes, father; but, really, Pamela is the light of the house, and my mother's right hand, and would be dreadfully missed."

"All very true," said Mr. Bohun, dwelling on her image with a smile of parental affection.

"Besides, she is not well enough—not strong enough."

"I told Mrs. Glyn she was not quite well at present, and she is perfectly ready to wait till Pamela is a little stronger. There is no hurry; and as I am speaking in confidence to my friends here, you will oblige me by saying nothing of it at home, where I shall, at present, only communicate it to your mother. Nothing is settled, and she may side with you."

"I'll live in hopes," said Fulk.

"It is a good plan, I think," said Mr. Bohun questioningly to Mrs. Althea, "to let Pamela get a little over this nervousness, or whatever it is, that hangs about her, before we startle her with any new prospects."

"Much the best," cried Mrs. Kitty.

"And I was proposing to Fulk, and meaning to propose to you," said Mrs. Althea, "that she should come to us for a little change, as soon as convenient."

"Thank you; that will be very salutary and very acceptable," said Mr. Bohun, "as far as we are concerned; but are you sure it will be convenient to yourselves?"

"Quite!—we love to have young people about us."

"But are you well enough?"

"Oh, that will make no difference! When pain comes, I must bear it, whether she be in or out of the house. In suffering, she will soothe me; in ease, she will cheer and amuse me."

"Very well; then she shall come to-morrow."

CHAPTER IX.

Pamela's Peccadillos.

Yet was she, certes, but a country lass—
Yet she all country lasses far did pass.

SPENSER.

And well, with ready hand and heart,
Each task of toilsome duty taking,
Did one dear inmate bear her part,
The last asleep, the earliest waking.
Her hands each nightly couch prepared,
And frugal meal on which they fared ;
Unfolding spread the servet white,
And decked the board with tankard bright.
Through fretted hose and garment rent,
Her tiny needle deftly went,
Till hateful penury, so graced,
Was scarcely in their dwelling traced
With reverence to the old she clung,
With sweet affection to the young ;
To her was crabbed lesson said,
To her the sly petition made,
To her was told each petty care,
To her was lisped the nightly prayer,
What time the urchin, half undressed,
And half asleep, was put to rest.

JOANNA BAILLIE.—*Metrical Legends.*

“ JOHN ! John ! ” a most lovely little boy of
four years old is saying to a country lad,
who is trenching garden-ground for the winter,
“ what’s the reason that when you cut a worm

in half with your spade, it can wriggle itself together again?"

"Indeed I don't know, sir," says John, spitting upon his hands, and then resuming his labours.

The little boy is not much better dressed than John, and yet in every limb and lineament is written gentleman; more especially in the beautiful little fat, white hands, with taper fingers. He cannot yet speak plainly: he calls John, "Don."

"If *you* were cut in half, John, could you wriggle together again?"

"Don't think I could, sir."

"Then, why can the worm?"

"Blest if I knows, sir."

"What do you mean, John, by 'blest if I knows?'"

"About the worm, sir. You'd better go and ask Miss Pamela."

Off trots the little boy from the great, prolific, sun-baked kitchen-garden adjoining the old parsonage, to a hazel-hedge, beneath which, in deep shade, sits a young girl on a mossy bank, in luxurious *abandon*, deep in the enjoyment of a book. Her large straw hat has been borrowed by a younger sister, who is nutting, for a basket. Up trots the baby-boy of the house.

"Pamma, what does John mean by 'blest if I knows?'"

"John is very vulgar to use such expressions, Roger; you must not learn them. John!" (raising her voice rather indignantly) "you must mind what you say to Master Roger."

"Yes, miss," respectfully touching the rim of a crownless hat.

Just then, some one from behind softly fans the back of her neck with a large leaf.

"Don't be teasing, Fulk—I am going to get ready directly. But just listen, first, to this lovely passage—"

He clears his throat a little. She goes on, without looking up; reclining still more at her ease on the mossy bank.

"I'm in the ninth canto, Fulk, of book six. 'Tis so lovely! Calidore is inquiring for the Blatant Beast (that's *Slander*, isn't it?) of some country shepherds, who, of course, know nothing about him (I don't know that that's of course, though); and while he is dining with them, he spies a pretty shepherdess, dressed in green, with a garland of flowers about her head, whom they seem to have made May-queen, for they are all dancing around her. Well, Calidore falls in love with her; and she, being the principal person in the place, and given to hospitality, invites him home to her father's little loam cottage; where old Melibee and his good beldame receive him kindly. The word beldame, Fulk, is here used quite honourably in respect of a good old woman; and, plainly, it comes

from *belle dame*, you know, though it never struck me before. Pastorella spreads a neat little supper, and the knight and the old shepherd get on quite comfortably together. Hear how nicely they talk :—

“ ‘ How much,’ said he, ‘ more happy is the state
In which ye, father, here do dwell at ease,
Leading a life so free and fortunate
From all the tempests of these worldly seas
Which toss the rest in dangerous disease !
Where wars and wrecks, and wicked enmity
Do them afflict, which no man can appease ;
That, certes, I your happiness envy,
And wish my lot were placed in such felicity.’

‘ Surely, my son,’ then answered he again,
‘ If happy, then it is in this intent,
That, having small, yet do I not complain
Of want, nor wish for more it to augment ;
But make myself with what I have content ;
So taught of nature, which doth little need
Of foreign helps to life’s due nourishment.
The field’s my fold ; my flock my raiment breed,
No better do I wear, no better do I feed.’

Something like papa, isn’t he ?

“ ‘ Therefore I do not any one envy,
Nor am envied by any one therefore.

See what high authority Dame Briggs has for saying envy !

“ ‘ They that have much, fear much to lose thereby,
And store of cares doth follow riches’ store.
The little that I have grows daily more
Without my care, but only to attend it ;
My lambs do every year increase their score,
And my flock’s Father daily doth amend it.
What have I, but to praise the Almighty that doth
send it ? ’

Sir Calidore gets so charmed with this pious old shepherd (and his daughter), that he resolves to stay there. He soon finds Pastorella has another lover, Corydon ; a sad, unmannered lout, whom she despises, and Corydon becomes spitefully jealous of the knight. But Calidore (who, you know, is courtesy itself) takes no unfair advantage of him. (Do keep the 'lash of your whip out of my eyes ! my box is packed, and I am going to get ready directly). He is of so excellent a nature that 'he shews no sign of rancour nor of jar,' but puts Corydon's clumsy attempts at compliment in the most pleasing light ; and when he brings her sparrows' nests or squirrels, and such like, he commends them to her and speaks up for them.

And so—

"One day, as they all three together went
Into the woods, to gather strawberries,
There chanced to them a dangerous accident,
A tiger—"

Here a little growl close behind her interrupted, but did not frighten her.

"A tiger forth out of the wood did rise —

Where *did* you get that ?" exclaimed Pamela, stopping short, as a repeater struck twelve close to her ear. Looking round, she started up, on seeing Mr. George Mildmay.

"I thought it was Fulk !" said she, turning very red.

"So I found," said he, smiling. "Thank you for reading me those pretty verses."

"Oh, I did not read them to *you*—I—Will you come into the house?"

"Thank you—I cannot spare time this morning."

He rode off after a few minutes' chat, looking rather amused.

Pamela had been very glad to accept Mrs. Althea's invitation, and Fulk drove her over to the Hill House, in a light chaise he had borrowed of a farmer.

She was about eighteen, tall, slender, brunette, with the eyes, teeth, and hair of a beautiful gipsy. But the joyousness of girlhood, which usually so well became her, was not now to be seen; in its place she had an air of lassitude and depression, which occasionally, when she spoke, gave place to a degree of asperity and peevishness quite foreign to her usual good humour. The younger members of her family had been the special sufferers by this; and as Mrs. Bohun saw the injury to their tempers that might ensue from their being the subjects of frequent and unreasonable crossness, she was heartily glad, for both parties' sakes, when the news of Mrs. Althea's seasonable invitation reached her.

As Pamela expected nothing but pleasure and relief from her visit, it was not likely that these unfavourable symptoms would soon appear at the Hill House; nor did they, except in a single brief tone and expression in something

she said to her brother relative to home, which escaped not the silent observation of Mrs. Althea; who thereupon said to herself, "Something's wrong. I must find out what it is, and mend it."

When, however, Fulk had departed, and Pamela, having made her little arrangements in the pretty bedroom allotted to her, came down smiling and pleasant, there seemed nothing that wanted mending. She said, "What can I do to help you, Mrs. Althea?"

So then Mrs. Althea gave her a skein of silk to wind, and talked to her of various matters unconnected with her home. Pamela, having wound the silk, asked for some work; and was asked in return, "Have you brought none?"

"Oh yes, some of those everlasting socks to knit, and some of those eternal wristbands to stitch."

"If they are eternal and everlasting," said Mrs. Althea quietly, "they will not soon need to be replaced."

"Really, Pamela," said Mrs. Kitty, who was just leaving the room, "such solemn terms as everlasting and eternal used for such trifling matters, seem to me to partake of the nature of swearing."

Pamela gave her a startled look with her brilliant black eyes, that one would think might have pierced poor Mrs. Kitty to the backbone, but which could not reach her through a deal

door, which luckily that unconscious lady had interposed between herself and the bright eyes as she spoke. Mrs. Althea could not help laughing. Pamela laughed a little, too, but not as if she thought it a very civil joke.

"Where was the fun?" said she.

"You are a comical lass," said Mrs. Althea.

"I think it was Mrs. Kitty who was comical, if anybody was," said Pamela.

"Now then," said Mrs. Althea, without pursuing the subject, "will you put a new lining and strings to this bag for me, or hem these frills?"

"Oh, the bag, please! What pretty pink persian! May I make the bag rather prettier in shape, Mrs. Althea?"

"Yes, my love, I shall like it all the better."

Chatting of one thing and another, they got on most harmoniously and cheerfully together till tea-time. Mrs. Althea related the story of her accident, her debt of gratitude to the butter-badger, and her singular introduction to Rhoda, who, Pamela was convinced, must be a very nice girl indeed.

"What tempting little slices of buttered roll!" said she, as Hannah spread the tea-table. "We have such great thick slices of bread-and-butter, they take away one's appetite."

"You have rather a larger party at your house than ours," said Mrs. Kitty, "and rather younger appetites."

"Yes, and even if we have toast, we must make it ourselves ; and mamma does not like us to cut thin slices like these."

"I should think not," said Mrs. Kitty ; "they take twice as much butter. I had no idea, though, missy, that you were so particular."

"When people lose their appetite for their daily food," said Pamela, rather faltering, "perhaps it makes them particular."

"Soho ! you've lost your appetite, have you ?" cried Mrs. Kitty, looking very hard at her ; "pray, how comes that ?"

"Kitty, you looked so like old Mrs. Bolton at that instant," said Mrs. Althea, laughing.

"Thank'e, ma'am, for the compliment."

Mrs. Althea was determined to carry the war into the enemy's quarter, and give Pamela time to avoid crying ; which she did so effectually, with plenty of drollery, and not the least ill-nature, that, at the end of tea, she was quite tired.

"Now, you've knocked yourself up," said Mrs. Kitty, who had laughed as much as Pamela.

"Something like it, said Mrs. Althea ; "so you shall read to me, Pamela, till I have recovered myself."

"With all my heart," said Pamela ; "what shall it be ?"

"Choose your own book, my dear."

"Here seems to be a novel called, 'Things by their right Names,'" said Pamela, examining the shelves.

"A capital one, too," said Mrs. Althea, "only I am afraid I know it by heart. If I were not so tired, you should try me."

"My dear child," interposed Mrs. Kitty to Pamela, "do look out something a little improving. We're not exactly eighteen."

"Fie, Kitty!" said Mrs. Althea; "you know very well you love a good novel now as dearly as ever, and have done so ever since you were younger than Pamela."

Mrs. Kitty muttered something about no good novels coming out now, to which nobody replied.

"Here's 'The Gleaner,'" said Pamela: "it looks like an agreeable miscellany."

"And is so, too," said Mrs. Althea. "How I used to pore over it when I had the hooping-cough!"

"Plenty of novelettes in *that*, young lady," said Mrs. Kitty, biting off her thread.

"Nay, Mrs. Kitty, here are some dull articles to balance them. Perhaps I shall find something here to suit all parties." And she returned to the table, with the four volumes.

"Would not one at a time have sufficed?" said Mrs. Kitty.

"Then I should have had four walks to the book-case," said Pamela, hardily.

" Now, stir the fire, the candles snuff,
And pray be sure they're long enough.

" ' Reflections on the Tombs in Westminster Abbey.' That will be improving, I should think, Mrs. Kitty? ' Marriage, happiness or misery of, a Reverie.' What a felicitous title! ' Poetry—The despairing Lover.' Oh, Mrs. Kitty! Mrs. Kitty! listen to this!—

" Distracted with care
For Phyllis the fair,
Since nothing would move her,
Poor Damon, her lover,
Resolves not to languish
And bear so much anguish;
But, mad with his love,
To a precipice goes,
Where a leap from above
Would soon finish his woes.
When in rage he came there,
Beholding how steep
The sides did appear,
And the bottom how deep,
His torments projecting,
And sadly reflecting
That a lover forsaken
A new love might get,
But a neck when once broken
Can never be set,
And that he could die
Whenever he would,
But that he could live
But as long as he could,
How grievous soever
His torments might grow,
He scorned to endeavour
To finish it so;
But, bold, unconcerned
At the thoughts of the pain,
He calmly returned
To his cottage again!"

"Like a sensible fellow," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Why, yes, I think so," said Pamela, laughing. "Then comes 'The Old Maid's Wish.' "

"Ah, I like that," said Mrs. Althea. "Let me hear it, my dear."

"As I grow an old maid, and find I go down,
Nor adored in the country, nor courted in town ;
In country or town let this still be my fate,
Not the jest of the young, nor of aged the hate.

May I govern my temper with absolute sway,
May my wisdom increase as my youth wears away,
And good-nature attend to my very last day.

"With the young or the old, with the maid or the wife,
Oh may I enliven the evening of life ;
Still gay without pride, and jocose without art,
With some sense in my tongue, and much truth in my heart.

May I, &c.

"May I not have one thought or desire to appear
In parties of pleasure, 'mong the young and the fair,
But with grave sober dames all my wishes fulfil,
With three dishes of tea, and three games of quadrille.

May I, &c.

"When grown still more old (as not courted when young),
May I ne'er wish to listen to man's flatt'ring tongue ;
And should some young spark to my fortune make love,
With scorn and contempt at his scheme, may I prove
I can govern my passions with absolute sway,
For my wisdom increases as youth wears away,
And good-nature attends to my very last day."

"Would that suit *you*, missy ?" said Mrs. Kitty, abruptly.

"Where's the need of personal application ?" said Pamela. "No—I don't think 'three dishes of tea and three games of quadrille' *would* suit me. If I am to be an old maid at all, as very

likely I shall be, I hope I shall be like Mrs. Althea, and not want to go out to card-parties. Otherwise, I like the verses."

"Soberly, though," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Well, they are sober verses," said Pamela. "'Sketch of some worn-out Characters of the last Century.' 'The Haunted House, an Anecdote.' That sounds promising."

"And fulfils its promise," said Mrs. Althea. "I am very fond of that paper."

"I will read it, then," said Pamela. And she read about the country squire's maiden aunt, with her phthisicky pug-dog, her keys at her apron-string, and her cupboards full of cherry and raspberry brandy, seed-cake, washes for the complexion, and physics for the poor; of "the little, independent gentleman" of three hundred pounds a year, in his plain drab or plush coat, large silver buttons, and jockey-cap, his travels limited to the next county town at session and assize time, his dinners with the country attorneys and justices, his vestry-meetings and his evenings at the alehouse: ending with, "Alas! these men and these houses are no more."

"And a very good thing too, I think," said Pamela.

"I can remember just such fellows," said Mrs. Kitty. "Sim Stokely: you recollect him, Althea?"

"To be sure I do," said Mrs. Althea. "And

Joe St. Leger. Joey, my father used to call him. Many's the time I've sat on his knee As George Mildmay said of his bat, 'he lived respected and died regretted.'"

"What bat?" said Pamela.

"A tame bat that put its hair in curl papers every night," said Mrs. Kitty. "But you haven't given us 'The Haunted House,' Pamela."

"Nor the verses," said Mrs. Althea, "beginning—

"If from the ceremonys of the silent dead
Our long-departed friends could rise anew,
Why feel a horror, or conceive a dread,
To see again those friends whom once we knew!"

"Dear Mrs. Althea, if you have them by heart already," said Pamela, "why would you

"Hear again those lines which once you knew?"

"There is a charm in the *sound* of our favourite pieces, my dear girl," said Mrs. Althea. "We do not always relish a tale the less for being twice told, or twenty times told."

"Such a tale as this, for instance," said Pamela, laughing; and she read out some ridiculous passages in "The Adventures of Emma." "I suppose that used to be called fine writing," said she.

"Such stories as those brought novel-reading into ill repute," said Mrs. Althea; "and no wonder."

"Ah, I once thought that tale a sweet thing," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Yes, Mrs. Kitty, I am sure it is bedewed with some long-dried tears. See, the paper is quite crumpled and mouldy in one place."

"No, that was when George Mildmay's father found me reading it under the crab-apple tree—Jack Mildmay, we used to call him—I jumped up to run away (for I couldn't bear him), and let the book fall on the wet grass."

"I fancy, Mrs. Kitty, some comical stories might be divulged of you and old Mr. Mildmay."

"*Old Mr. Mildmay!* Come, I like that! No older than you will be, if you live as long. He was very well-looking, and very fond of me, I can assure you."

"Then why were not you equally fond of him?"

"There's no accounting for tastes, you know," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Was he at all like his son?" said Pamela, appealing to Mrs. Althea.

"My dear?" returned Mrs. Althea with a start. "I beg your pardon! I believe I was not attending."

Mrs. Kitty laughed. "Well," said she, "that's a subject you seldom fail to rouse at. But you are getting sleepy now: we will have prayers and supper, and go to bed. Bring me the great Bible, Pamela."

When Pamela retired for the night, she was surprised to reflect how remote from everything leading to her home had been the various subjects of their conversation. "Well," thought she, "every one lives in their own little circle, and has their own round of ideas, which sometimes get very wearisome and perplexing; and then it is a very good thing to break through them."

With morning dawn, every one in her father's busy house was accustomed to arise; for he inculcated that "a sluggard is next to a waster," and acted on the principle of those simple, forcible lines, by Knight of Covent Garden—

" Oh, waste not thou the smallest thing
Created by Divinity,
For grains of dust the mountains make,
And atomies infinity.
And waste thou not the smallest time,
'Tis man's insane infirmity;
For well thou knowest, if aught thou knowest,
That moments make eternity."

But, knowing that Mrs. Kitty, though early afoot, was engrossed by her dairy cares at that hour, and that Mrs. Althea's ill health prevented her leaving her room so soon as would otherwise have been the case, Pamela had an extra hour's luxurious enjoyment of her pillow, which, to the over-wrought in mind or body is occasionally as salutary as it is delightful. To Pamela it was, for the time, quite restoring. Of course, she had a good scolding from Mrs. Kitty when they met at breakfast; but Pam-

had a kind of sturdiness which made her impenetrable to chiding when causelessly bestowed ; and “ the soft word that breaketh the bone,” and melteth the rock, would, from Mrs. Althea, at any time, have sunk into her heart, when Mrs. Kitty’s objurgations proved but the “ hard words that break no bones.”

After breakfast, Pamela industriously applied herself to her stitching, as well from an innate principle of duty as from a secret consciousness that Mrs. Althea would sooner see her so employed than turning over the leaves of the most innocently amusing book. Besides, she had the prospect of a long, uninterrupted morning with that loved friend ; and needlework left her mind and tongue at leisure for many a theme interesting and pleasant to them both. After two hours of this intercourse, however, Mrs. Althea thought it expedient to propose air and exercise to her young friend ; but Pamela demurred, and as a little change of occupation, even though of light reading before sunset, seemed earned, (though the reverse was the home rule), she took the first volume of ‘ Things by their Right Names ’ from the shelf, placed herself in Mrs. Kitty’s bee-hive chair, and was soon immersed in her book ; while Mrs. Althea, with her little writing apparatus at her elbow, pondered, constructed, and revised a letter to ‘ the Squire,’ on Fulk’s character and prospects, before she committed a word of it to paper. Their silent com-

panionship received no interruption till a chaise drove briskly to the gate.

"Here's Mr. Forest," cried Pamela, starting up. "I shall leave you to your consultation."

"Return before he goes, then," said Mrs. Althea, "for I want him to see you."

"But I don't want to see *him*," interrupted Pamela, "for I would rather not have any of his advice; so pray don't tell him I am here. I shall run off with my book to one of the green wigs."

And laughing as she spoke, she darted away just in time to escape him.

C H A P T E R X.

The Green Wig.

Benevolence, from its very nature, composes the mind, warms the heart, enlivens the whole frame, and brightens every feature of the countenance. It may justly be said to be medicinal, both to soul and body.

DR. THOMAS REID.

M R. FOREST was a middle-aged man, clever and kind, but not addicted, like his junior partner, to much unprofessional talking; for which, indeed, his extended practice seldom gave him time.

However, he used to relax a little sometimes in Mrs. Althea's behalf, by chatting for ten minutes on the news of the day. Having done so in the present instance, he had leisure to observe a fine geranium at the other end of the room, and walked towards it to admire it; after which he looked through the bow window into the garden.

"It is getting rather too late in the season for sitting out of doors," said he. "There's some one in the arbour."

"Before the leaves fell, that arbour could not be seen from the window," said Mrs. Althea, inwardly amused. "It is sheltered from the north."

"It is not Mrs. Kitty," said he, after a moment's pause, "unless she wears a large straw hat with a blue ribbon."

"Which she has not done these twenty years," said Mrs. Althea, laughing. "It is Pamela Bohun, who is spending a few days with us. You frightened her away."

"I am sorry I am so formidable," said Mr. Forest, still looking out.

"I wanted you to see her," said Mrs. Althea, "for she is not very well; but she started off at the first word."

"Perhaps she likes George's advice better than mine," said Mr. Forest. "He has seen her once or twice; and so have I."

"What ails her, do you suppose?"

"Well, to tell you the plain truth, I think it is merely from being overwrought in various ways. They are a large family, a very large family, with very little to live upon: all putting their shoulder to the wheel that can; and some of them overtaxing their strength. There's the mother, nearly ready to break down; and Pamela, discerning it with quick affection, does too much herself in order to relieve her."

"Just what I thought! One cannot help loving her for it."

"Help it! No! But we must not let it go on so, for all that, or she'll go into a decline, and so break the heart of the mother she wishes to spare every sorrow and trouble. And, just because I give her to understand as much, she does not like to see me. However, I want to speak a word to her, notwithstanding; and, with your permission, I'll just step through that glass door."

"She'll see you, and run away. No; if you really want to catch her, you had better go out of the front gate, and round under the garden wall to the little postern-door, which is pretty sure to be unlatched, and which is just behind the arbour."

"Thank you; I will. And I can tell John, at the same time, to drive round, so that I need not come back."

He went, but lost his object; for the parlour having a double light, Pamela, looking up from her book, saw him in the window, guessed he must see her, and darted from the "green wig," down the pleached alley, through the scullery, kitchen, and stone passage, up into her own bedroom, where she remained snugly ensconced till she heard the muffled sound of his gig driving over the turf across the common.

Then she returned to Mrs. Althea, in such glee at the success of her retreat, that Mrs. Kitty, coming in with a cottager's "amazing fat baby," that she thought Mrs. Althea must

admire, could not imagine what they were both laughing so heartily at. When told, the joke seemed to her poor enough; but it supplied Pamela with good spirits for the rest of the day.

Meanwhile Rhoda's thoughts were running so much on Bever Hollow, that her uncle, who wanted to call on Mr. Glyn, offered to make her his companion. Anna and Charlotte had already exchanged visits with Mrs. Glyn, whom they thought a repelling old lady; and, as they had no particular taste for old tumble-down places with long pedigrees, they only begged their father, if Mr. Glyn were at home, which he never seemed to be, and if he appeared worth knowing, to invite him to dinner, without standing on ceremony.

Rhoda was very fond of riding with her uncle, which she could not do except when she could have one of her cousins' horses. As they cantered over the smooth turf and along the road, her colour and spirits rose, and she became quite talkative, much to the benefit of Mr. Hill, who, being a quiet man, was glad when his companions took the trouble of amusing him and themselves.

The first view of Bever Hollow, backed by the steep downs dotted with sheep, and with its numerous irregular gables, chimney-stacks, and casements peering among some fine oaks and chestnuts, even surpassed her expectations.

Through the gateway, which had three escutcheons over it, was riding forth a very handsome young man, well mounted, with a greyhound, whom the gatekeeper was evidently saluting as his master. The gentleman drew his rein on seeing the visitors approach, giving them an inquiring look; and then, riding up to them, said—

“Mr. Hill, I believe?—my name is Glyn;” and held out his hand.

“I am glad to make your acquaintance, sir,” said Mr. Hill. “My niece, Miss Rhoda Hill.” On which, bows were exchanged; and Mr. Glyn turned his horse about, to accompany them to the house.

“Pray don’t return on our account,” said Mr. Hill. “I dare say you have affairs elsewhere.”

“Don’t mention them, pray,” said Mr. Glyn, cordially. “I have nothing which may not very well be deferred to prevent my having now the pleasure I have already missed of seeing you in my own house.”

“A fine old place, sir,” said Mr. Hill; “those are the arms of its former occupants, the Halls, over the gateway, I presume?”

“Oh, no,” said Mr. Glyn, smiling. “If we were merely life-tenants, or tenants-at-will, I would never have displaced the old escutcheons, if I had found any. But, you see, the place is *mine*; and therefore it was quite simple that I

should put up the arms of the Glyns, Lewknors, and De Rosendales. We intermarried, you know, in the time of Henry the Sixth, with the younger brother of the Sir Thomas Lewknor who married the heiress of Sir Richard Dalyngrudge."

Mr. Hill knew nothing about it; but he only said, "Ah, I see," and began to admire the timber.

" You have some fine wood about the Hall," said Mr. Glyn, rather condescendingly; for though it had a great many more trees, they were not nearly so old.

" The Hall is a larger place, but not nearly so pretty as View Hollow," said Rhoda.

" View Hollow! Do you mean *Bever Hollow*?" cried Mr. Glyn, arching his eyebrows.

" I forgot," said Rhoda, laughing. " That was only Mrs. Althea's old name for it."

Mr. Glyn laughed very heartily, and said he thought it a very original translation of Beauvoir. Besides, it had sprung up among the old inhabitants, and had therefore something respectable in it. He understood the Halls were very worthy people, though he had not the pleasure of their acquaintance.

" I should have thought they would be just the sort of people you would like," said Rhoda, simply.

" Why?" said Mr. Glyn, with surprise.

" Because their family is so ancient."

"Oh! Pretty well for that, though we came in with the Conqueror."

"But *they* are Saxon."

"Thegns, then, I think," said Mr. Glyn. "They were men of peace, and we were men of war."

"None the better for that, perhaps," said Rhoda, briskly.

He looked amused, and said, "Why, you are doing battle yourself. I see I shall find you a sharp antagonist—quite a Clorinda!"

This silenced Rhoda, who coloured a little, and thought she had been too forward.

"If you look down upon all who did not come in with the Conqueror, I am afraid you will have little to say to me," said Mr. Hill good-humouredly, "for I can't trace my line up higher than my grandfather."

"I was just going to remark to Miss Hill," said Mr. Glyn, "that one does not value people simply for their descent, though it is a good thing to have it. Consequently, their ancient blood alone was hardly temptation enough to induce my mother and me to go so far in quest of two old ladies."

"Two such *nice* old ladies," said Rhoda, timidly.

"*Are they?*" said Mr. Glyn, doubtfully.

"Mrs. Althea is, at any rate. And I believe Mrs. Kitty is very amiable."

"Well, I hope she is," said Mr. Glyn,

smiling ; " but she *does* look funny, riding about in that mannish attire. Why need she unsex herself ? "

At this moment, they reached the Hall-door ; on the lawn in front of which, two pretty little girls of six and eight years old were playing with a little white dog with a blue ribbon round his neck.

" Run in, Adela and Mab," said Mr. Glyn, " and tell grandmamma here are Mr. and Miss Hill come to call on her,"—at the same time assisting Rhoda from her horse before Mr. Hill could get his feet out of his stirrups.

The entrance-hall was very dark, and rendered more so by the narrow slits of windows being glazed with painted glass, covered with coats-of-arms and mediæval saints. The drawing-room was quaint, and replete with comfort, from the heavy ruby-coloured curtains to the snow-white sheepskin hearth-rug. The old lady did not seem inclined to hurry herself for her guests, therefore Mr. Glyn did the best he could for them in her absence by pointing out to Mr. Hill a picture of the Four Evangelists by Andrea Mantegna, and calling Rhoda's attention to a casket engraved with arabesques by Maso Finiguerra.

When old Mrs. Glyn entered in all her majesty, in her black velvet gown, and leaning on her ivory-headed cane, she looked almost forbidding ; but as soon as she saw that Rhoda

was neither Anna nor Charlotte, her countenance cleared, and she proved that she could be both courteous and pleasant. Her youngest granddaughter, holding her by the skirt, peeped shyly through her long flaxen curls ; and Rhoda thought they might aptly have been painted as personifying Age and Childhood.

When Mr. Glyn had seen his visitors off, he returned to his mother.

"The old gentleman has invited me to dinner," said he.

"Surely he might have waited till we asked him first," said Mrs. Glyn.

"In that case, my dear mother, he would have waited long enough ; for you know you meant never to invite him at all."

"Well, Charles, this forwardness of his shows him for what I thought him—an upstart, unacquainted with the usages of good society. Are you going ?"

"Why, yes. He seems a well-meaning, unpretending man enough, and his niece is a pleasant, unaffected girl."

"More than can be said of his daughters. He certainly appears to more advantage without them. They are decidedly pushing ; and scheming too, I fancy."

"That is only fancy, however."

"Not quite. This dinner may be a trap for you."

"Ho, ho, ho !"

"Ah, you may laugh, but I know girls better than you do. And I think these are deep. I am sure they are disagreeable. But I like the niece."

"So do I, and I can get on very well with the old gentleman, though he *does* call this Bever Ollow! His niece calls it View Hollow; what do you think of that, mother?"

Anna and Charlotte were considerably impressed with Rhoda's description of Mr. Glyn, though Charlotte observed they must deduct sixty per cent. from it, because she also spoke in favour of Mrs. Glyn, whom they knew to be a repulsive old lady. Any way, it was pleasant to think Mr. Glyn was coming to dinner; and the chief question was, how they should make up a suitable party to meet him.

From whatever cause it might be, it was an undeniable fact that the Hills had not hitherto become very popular in the neighbourhood. They were rich, but they did not seem to know how to spend their money; they were ostentatious in some things, and parsimonious in others. Many of the established families had called on them, to see what they were; but finding them neither clever nor entertaining, nor highly educated, nor very well-bred, nor accustomed to the usages of the best society, they had been pronounced rather *mauvais ton*, and the calls were repeated at long intervals, if repeated at all, and in most cases were not suc-

ceeded by invitations. Still there are always some who like to visit everybody ; and thus the Miss Hills were not destitute of acquaintance, though there were several houses from which, to their chagrin, they were shut out. Hence, when they came to draw out a list for their dinner-party, they found its component parts rather heterogeneous, and were afraid that if they had any refusals they should even be deficient in numbers.

CHAPTER XI.

Pamela's Troubles.

And thou, though strong in love, art all too weak
In reason : in self-government too slow.
I counsel thee, by fortitude to seek
Our blest reunion in the shades below.
The invisible world with thee hath sympathized.
Be thy affections raised and solemnized.

WORDSWORTH.—*Laodamia.*

THE next day was Sunday.

“Shall I stay at home and read with you, Mrs. Althea?” said Pamela.

“By no means, my dear,” said Mrs. Althea. “Hannah always remains with me in the morning, and Kitty in the afternoon. At one time I was bold enough to think I could spare them both, but Kitty would not hear of it, unless I had a young girl who lives on the skirts of the common to take Hannah’s place. So Sally Price came,—though, as she was kept from church instead of Hannah, I cannot say much good was gained.”

“She would not have gone to church,” interrupted Mrs. Kitty.

“Well, perhaps not. But Sally was a

coward,—one of those lasses that never have their wits about them. It was fair-time, and though we are not very near the fair-ground, a good many tramps always pay us their respects on that occasion, hanging about the common, boiling their potatoes under hedges, laying their hands on geese, hens, and linen spread to bleach,—now and then frightening people in lone farm-houses. One of these sturdy fellows, shaggy as a lion, found his way to the back-door the first (and only) Sunday Sally had me in charge. She, doubtless showing her fears in her face, told him to go away, instead of which he took hold of the lintel of the door, to prevent her closing it. So then she banged it against his fingers, making him roar out with pain, and not only roar, but, as she said, ‘to cuss and to swear,’ and vow she should be the worse for it. As soon as she had bolted out this ‘thundering rogue,’ as Hannah calls him, she came into the parlour, crying aloud, and begging she might sit with me till Hannah came back. When Kitty returned, and found I had been protector, she said she would have no more nonsense, and that Hannah and she must never go to church together again.”

“Quite right,” cried Pamela. “Fancy a person as helpless as you are, at the mercy of a ‘thundering rogue!’”

“Althea tried her best upon Sally,” said Mrs. Kitty, laughing, “in the way of reading,

writing, and arithmetic; but she found all her pains lost. So then I took her in hand, and made her a thorough cleaner."

"Yes; and Sally is not the only unpromising subject," said Mrs. Althea, "that Kitty has converted into a good farm-servant."

"Oh, she wasn't *that*," said Kitty; "for a good farm-servant wants a head, as well as other people."

"Some seem born without one," said Pamela, "and yet they get on somehow. I never can make out how far it is desirable to educate the poor."

"What sort of books does your father recommend for them?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Well, you will perhaps consider him rather narrow-minded. A man has lately come round to our houses and cottages, with a good many cheap serials, stories, histories, biographies, in penny numbers, with gay paper covers and showy frontispieces. Papa does not encourage him—he says our poor people have so little time to read, that that little should not be frittered away and diverted from the Bible and solid books."

"Excellent," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Excellent," said Mrs. Althea, doubtfully, "and yet I am not quite sure that it works as well as it sounds. Jewellers find that the purest gold requires alloy to make it work well. The theory is excellent, but is the practice quite satisfactory? I am afraid, if I had early

been restricted to solid books, I should not have been much of a reader. At any rate, I should have missed the desultory accumulation of a great deal of miscellaneous knowledge that has turned to various accounts throughout my life; and though I would not recommend quite such a desultory course of reading, yet a general—a miscellaneous course I would recommend to any one who had it within their reach. Mrs. Rafferty's Grecian colonnade at the top of her verandah is not very safe architecture; but in reading, I think, the solids sometimes get the upper place."

"Well, Pamela, it is time for us to get ready," said Mrs. Kitty; "for it is a good pull to Collington church."

"How I wish we could take you with us!" said Pamela, lingering.

"Ah, don't name it," said Mrs. Althea, with a tear twinkling in her eye. "What must be, must—and I don't often yield to regrets; though I *should* enjoy it if we could go up to the house of the Lord in company."

"Pain, pain, go to Spain!" said Pamela, smiling, and kissing her.

"No, no! I must not, will not echo that! Pain *is* pain; though whether it be an evil or not, I have not, all this long while, clearly made out. But, grant it an evil. Well, then! the Christian may say—

'Evil, be thou my *good!*'

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in a different sense from that of the lost archangel. But, now, you have no time to lose."

When Pamela came down from her room, and saw Mrs. Althea lying peacefully with folded hands, "and looks commerced with the skies," she, who had hardly known a day's illness, felt impressed by it, and said, with a little awe,—

"Perhaps you are the most enviable of us, after all!"

"How so?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Oh,—you are so weaned from the world,—you have so much leisure for prayer and good thoughts."

"My dear," said Mrs. Althea, quickly, "never say anything of that sort again! I have had a good deal to wean me from the world, but that is a very different matter from *being* weaned. And 'leisure'? Truly, I have enough and to spare!—but I can't always employ it in prayer, nor even in good thoughts. It is my burthen that I cannot. But I don't want to talk about this—there's Kitty coming down stairs, and you have a nice, brisk walk to church before you, and a soul-cleansing service to take part in, and a good sermon to hear—and, my dear, you have no time to lose. I am glad Kitty has you here to-day. Dear soul, she does not often get a companion."

This was another new light to Pamela.

"She does not, certainly," thought she, as she followed her brisk, elderly friend. "Poor Mrs. Kitty! it must be dull to her to be always nursing. Not that she minds it a bit, I know very well; she is too good for that—but still, we all like a little variety, and require it too; so I will make her as cheerful as I can."

When Rhoda called, the next day, at the Hill House, she felt rather jealous at finding a nice girl established in Mrs. Althea's parlour; but Pamela was so pretty and pleasant that her heart soon warmed towards her, and Mrs. Althea presently sent them into the garden together, to cut her a nosegay of autumn flowers.

Soon afterwards, George Mildmay dropped in; and, after a little personal talk, Mrs. Althea said, "George, I advise you to take a turn in our garden this fine morning."

"Why?" said he, with surprise.

"Oh,—because it looks so nice just now; especially with two nice young ladies in it."

"Who are they?" said he, laughing. "You know I'm very select."

"You may be as select as you like, then," said Mrs. Althea, "if neither Miss Rhoda Hill nor Miss Bohun are worthy of your attention."

"Oh, come! they are too great attractions," said he, starting up. "One of them is a beautiful girl, at any rate."

"Which?" said Mrs. Althea, looking keenly at him.

"Aye, which!" said he, laughing. "There's something for you to amuse yourself about while I'm away, for I'm not going to tell you." And he walked off without further ceremony.

The girls had just reached the end of the turf-walk, and were turning round,—Pamela with a few flowers and the garden scissars in her hand.

"Here comes Mr. Mildmay," observed Rhoda. "Is it true, do you think, that he cured a poor labouring man of epilepsy with musk, at a guinea a dose, which he paid for out of his own pocket?"

"Quite true," said Pamela. "That is to say, the man is not thoroughly cured, for he still has fits sometimes, though not so badly nor so often; but I know Mr. Mildmay gave him the musk at his own expense. The man belongs to our parish. Stay—there is a lovely rose!"

George here came up to the young ladies, whom he greeted with equal deference. "Mrs. Althea sent me out," said he, "for the benefit of my health or spirits, I don't exactly know which; but she is always doing, or trying to do good. Allow me to get that rose for you, Miss Bohun."

"Is nobody ill this morning?" said she, gaily.

"Well, a poor fellow *may* take ten minutes' relaxation sometimes, I hope, without any ma-

terial sacrifice of his professional duties ; or if I find he cannot, I won't transgress again—(till the next time). Will that satisfy you ? ”

“ I suppose it must.”

“ Will it satisfy *you*, Miss Hill ? ”

“ Oh yes, quite ! —till I am ill and under your care, and find you neglect me.”

“ That shall never happen ! Never ! Witness it, all ye roses and posies ! By the bye, how very late some of Mrs. Althea's flowers are blowing ! —you are making quite a summer nosegay.”

“ I would sooner have flowers blow late than early, said Pamela. “ I don't like forestalling the seasons.”

“ Do you think the seasons are later than they used to be in former times ? ” said Rhoda.

“ Yes—no—I have heard people say so.”

“ The whitethorn we call May,” pursued Rhoda, “ seldom blows till June, and I have read that formerly white lilies were used in decorating churches on St. John's day ; but now they do not blow till July.”

“ Do you not know the reason of that ? ” cried Pamela, springing back from the centre of a flower-border, and leaving a very pretty little footprint on the soft mould. “ The difference of style ! The year was set forward fifteen days, when the style was altered, so that the flowers which our old poets speak of as blooming in the middle of May, are in reality not

due till the beginning of June ; and so with the other months."

" I never thought of that," said Rhoda, " nor heard it before. Did you, Mr. Mildmay ? "

" No," said George. " Miss Bohun is always broaching extraordinary new ideas."

" Not heteroclite ones, though," said Pamela.

" Heteroclite ? " repeated Rhoda.

" Heterodox, she means," explained George, " only that's too common, except for such as I am."

" That's the worst of living among boys," said Pamela, worrying off a sprig of sweet-briar. " Mamma says sometimes I have had but a boy's education."

" Oh, she cannot mean that," said Rhoda ; with an interrogative look, however, towards George.

" No," said George ; " Miss Bohun can do beadwork, and patchwork, and fretwork, and all the other works, like all other young ladies, I believe."

" Fretwork, indeed ! " said Pamela.

" Well, can't you make people fret ? "

" If I can, I never do."

" How can you say so ? "

" Why, who ? " said she, turning short upon him, and looking scandalized. He laughed, and did not reply.

" There, I have completed my nosegay," said Pamela. " Shall we go in ? "

"Oh, take another turn!" pleaded George. And, at the same moment, the spray of a prickly shrub catching the ribbon of Rhoda's bonnet, he sprang forward, and began to disentangle it with great energy.

"Thank you—gently, gently, please," said Rhoda.

George threw still more ardour into his exertions. "I was reading the casket-scene in the Merchant of Venice, last night," said he. "Do you remember those capital lines of the Prince of Arragon?" And, with a great deal more of theatrical action than the passage required, he began to spout—

'Let none presume
To wear an undeserved dignity!
O that estates, degrees, and offices
Were not derived corruptly! and that honour
Were purchased by the merit of the wearer.'

—"For then, don't you see, Miss Hill, *I* should be parish-doctor instead of Tom Knight?" Then, clasping his hands with vehemence, and stepping backwards before her, as she advanced,—

'How many, then, should cover, that stand bare?
How many be commanded, that command.'

—"isn't it so, Miss Hill?"

"Indeed, I hardly know," said Rhoda, with embarrassment. "I believe I do not quite understand you—"

"Who can?" said Pamela. "What application is there? or how do such lines require

such violent action? You are laughing at us, I believe, though I don't know why you should!"

"I?" exclaimed George, still in heroics, "I dare to laugh at you? or at *you*, Miss Hill?"

Meanwhile, Mrs. Kitty, standing at the window, was saying to her sister, "Whatever can George be about? He's talking to Miss Hill so vehemently!—"

"Miss Hill!" repeated Mrs. Althea, looking up from her book.

"Clasping his hands like an actor," pursued Mrs. Kitty, "and walking backwards, just in front of her. Oh, he's very eager about something or other, I can tell you!"

"Dear me," said Mrs. Althea. "And where's Pamela?"

"Walking behind—close to them though—now, she is saying something, rather in a huff, I fancy—do you feel sure of her temper, Althea?"

"O, quite," said Mrs. Althea.

"Well, I suspect it's rather warm."

"Why, you and I are warm, sometimes, are not we? and yet neither of us thinks the other ill-tempered."

Mrs. Kitty laughed.

"Well, we *are* rather quick, at times," said she, "and that's the truth on't."

"Still water is not always the purest or

the sweetest," said Mrs. Althea, "and even the sweetest and purest may be *ruffled*."

"Aye, that's it with Pamela," said Mrs. Kitty, "sweet and pure as heart can wish, but easily ruffled as you say; and we'll lay the fault on the winds and not on the waves."

"O yes! and there are no waves, so to speak — only* a dimpling ripple, when the breeze blows up-current."

"Which it does just now, decidedly," said Mrs. Kitty. "George is saying something that nettles her, or else she thinks he is paying Miss Hill too much attention."

"She would not be so silly," muttered Mrs. Althea.

"Well, they are all coming in now," said Mrs. Kitty; and, the next minute, George and Rhoda entered talking and laughing, with Pamela just behind them, twisting a vine-tendril round her nosegay; "Is not that lovely?" said she, as she gave it to Mrs. Althea with a sweet smile.

"They are lovely in themselves, and you have arranged them beautifully," said Mrs. Althea, who continued admiring the flowers, and asking questions about them, while Pamela stood beside her, dangling her straw hat by its ribbon: George and Rhoda still continuing their lively chat, into which they had drawn Mrs. Kitty. Pamela looked serious, but not

at all cross, and proceeded to arrange the flowers in water.

George at length started up, declaring that he really dared loiter no longer; and, as he shook hands with Mrs. Althea, he gaily said, "You must not lay such traps for me again! Forest would rate me soundly if he knew how I have been wasting the last half-hour!"

And, as he rode off, rather a mischievous light sparkled in his eye, and a smile curled his lip, as he thought within himself, "Aha, Mrs. Althea! I've set you on a false scent, ma'am, for as wise as you think yourself!"

Whether Mr. Mildmay were justified in so doing, at the price it might cost other people, a jury of elderly ladies may determine. On a grand scale, certainly no; on such a small one, perhaps yes..

In the evening, the Hill-house party were very quiet. Mrs. Kitty was studying the county paper, Pamela was immersed in a book, and Mrs. Althea lay resting, and revolving many things in her mind.

All at once, Pamela exclaimed indignantly, "Call these heroines, indeed! they are a couple of underbred, vulgar girls!"

"Heyday! what now?" said Mrs. Kitty, looking up from her paper, "what book have you got hold of?"

"The Vicar of Wakefield," said Pamela, "Geoffrey has been reading it, and praising

it to the skies, so I thought I should like it too; but I have no patience with Olivia and Sophia."

"Times and manners are altered;" said Mrs. Kitty, returning to the corn-market.

"And Sophia is much better than Olivia," said Mrs. Althea.

"Why, her father says so," rejoined Pamela doubtfully; "but, at the beginning, I don't think there is much to choose between them. 'The one vanquished by a single blow, the other by efforts successively repeated.' Efforts, indeed!—Two girls as young as I am!"

"Girls were not educated then as they are now, Pamela," said Mrs. Althea.

"I should think not! How could they be, by such a vulgar, ignorant mother? a woman who could laugh and jeer at this good old respectable Mr. Burchell, and whose economy, even her partial husband said, never made him any richer."

"*Old* Mr. Burchell?" cried Mrs. Kitty.
"Why, he was but thirty!"

"But he is drawn older," interposed Mrs. Althea, "and his short, dry speech, keeps up the illusion."

"Thirty? I should think Mr. Glyn must be thirty," said Pamela reflectively. "Don't you, Mrs. Althea?"

"My love, I never saw him"

"I've seen him," said Mrs. Kitty, "he is a

very handsome man, under thirty, I should say."

"But, dear Mrs. Kitty, he has two little girls, the eldest of whom must be eight years old at least. Their mother died when the youngest was a baby."

"Yes, and a very sad affair it was," said Mrs. Althea, "I remember hearing of it from Mr. Forest. The grandmother has taken care of them ever since."

"A great charge for her," said Mrs. Kitty.

"I should think she could have no greater pleasure," said Mrs. Althea.

"I should think so too," said Pamela: "she is a very nice old lady. Papa sees her often." Then, returning to her enemy, the Vicar: "But, just hear this, Mrs. Althea! 'A suit of mourning has transformed my coquette into a prude, and a new set of ribbons has given her younger sister more than natural vivacity.' O, stupid, senseless girls! with their pomades and patches, and washes for the complexion! I'm glad their father overturned the pipkin. If Prudence and I were to go on so, what would my father do, I wonder?"

As one quiet day followed another, Mrs. Althea was pleased to mark that Pamela was gradually throwing off the traces of lassitude and irritability, and being restored to her cheerful, active self.

On the Wednesday following Pamela's ar-

rival, when her visit had just extended to a week, Mr. Forest again called on Mrs. Althea, but took her by surprise by entering from the garden.

"Well," said he, laying aside his hat and gloves, and looking rather grave; "I found somebody in the arbour this time. Guessing that the postern-door might again be open, I tried and found it so, and caught Pamela in the arbour. I might just as well have spared my pains, Mrs. Althea! She won't hear a word I have to say."

He looked so hurt, that Mrs. Althea felt concerned for him.

"Wilful girls must have their way," said she; "and it seems that Pamela has not quite got over her little fit of perversity yet; but you know as well, perhaps, as I do, that it is not her natural character to be perverse; and I am happy to tell you that I really think there is less need of your kind advice now than there was a week ago."

"That depends on the nature of the advice," said he, so dryly, that Mrs. Althea, with a woman's quick instinct, instantly felt something more to be meant than met the ear. What could it be? Had it any reference to George? Had he suspected any unrequited attachment for him, and taken the officious step of warning her that nothing could, would, or ought to come of it? Mrs. Althea had not leisure to unravel

this web at once, for Mr. Forest began to question her about herself; and then to speak of a trying case he was watching; which, for the time, engrossed all her thoughts.

After he was gone, she did not think again of Pamela till dinner, when the sight of her eyes, looking very red, as if with much crying, fixed her attention.

"My dear!" cried she, startled; "what's the matter? are you not well?"

"Quite well, thank you," said Pamela, in a broken voice, and retreating towards the dining-parlour.

"Dinner! dinner!" cried Mrs. Kitty, running down stairs, and rapping the door with her knuckles; and Pamela hastily obeyed the summons, apparently glad to escape any more questioning. Mrs. Althea meditated much over her boiled mutton-chop, and finally arranged a nice little way of resuming the subject; but when Pamela reappeared, it was in her straw hat, and she said Mrs. Kitty had commissioned her to carry some tea and sugar to a poor sick person in a distant cottage.

It was Mr. Bohun's evening, and when he saw Mrs. Althea, she took a letter from her pocket and silently gave it him to read; watching his face as he did so, with a smile. It was from Mr. Heathcote, in other words, "the Squire," promising to pay Fulk's reasonable expenses at Oxford for three years. Mr. Bohun,

as soon as he had run through it, warmly grasped her hand.

"It will be the making of the boy!" cried he.
"How much good you do on your sofa!"

"Not much," replied she, deeply gratified, "but I am thankful to be permitted to do a little. The Squire is going to do a good deal."

"Pamela, read that!" cried her father, holding out the letter to her, as she entered the room, and then taking her in his arms—"Why, my girl, you are pale and heavy-eyed still."

"She has not been so till to-day," said Mrs. Althea. "We thought her wonderfully improved; but just now she is no credit to us."

As Pamela's eye darted over the letter, however, her brilliant colour and beautiful smile returned.

"Dear, dear Mrs. Althea!" cried she, throwing her arms round her; "how can we ever thank you enough?"

"Oh, there are plenty of ways of thanking both me and the Squire," said Mrs. Althea. "You, by getting quite well and tractable,—Fulk, by being a good boy at college, and growing up as much like his father as he can—I should like to see his first look about it!"

"You should," said Mr. Bohun, "but that the poor fellow slipped down and dislocated his ankle this afternoon, and will probably be a prisoner for some little time. Mr. Forest has seen him already, and I was thinking of taking

you home, Pamela, to help wait on the poor boy."

Pamela's cheek had blanched when she heard of the accident; but, to Mrs. Althea's surprise, she shewed no readiness to nurse her brother.

"Is it a dangerous accident, papa?" said she.

"Oh, no, my love! only a troublesome one."

"Then, could not mamma and Prudence get on without me a little longer, do you think?"

"Pamela! I am surprised——" Mrs. Althea could not help saying.

Mr. Bohun, however, calmly replied, "Certainly, my love, they can; and as, in all probability, they *must* a little while hence, they may as well begin now."

"Papa! what *can* you mean?"

"Ah, that's a secret I promised not to tell," said he, with a playful smile, which produced anything but a corresponding expression on his daughter's face. She looked at him wistfully, and tears came into her eyes.

"Come," said he, holding out his arms to her, "it is nothing to cry about; or, if you, when you hear what it is, think differently, it shall not take place."

"Papa, you may as well tell me at once."

"No, my love; your mamma thinks not, till you have come home quite well."

"Papa, I can't get well while anything is hanging over my head. I believe I guess what it is."

"Then there is the less need of my telling," said he, smiling.

She was going to answer him rather impatiently, when Hannah entered with the tea-kettle, preceded by Mrs. Kitty; and with a sigh, and another piteous look at him, she gave up the subject for the time. Nor was it resumed, except to be shortly and imperatively, though kindly, broken off by him, at the close of the evening, when he wished her good night, with "My love, you know that what your mamma and I say is law. You shall know all in good time."

And Pamela went to bed, to steep her pillow with tears.

"This will never do," thought Mrs. Althea, the next morning, when she saw Pamela's red eyes, and heard Mrs. Kitty charge her with having been reading in bed; which was neither assented to nor denied. "Mr. Bohun means all for the best, but it is all for the worst; suspense wears us more than anything, and I must get it ended."

"Come, Pamela, what is it?" said she, in her gentlest tone, as soon as they were by themselves.

"What is what?" said Pamela, starting.

"The trouble in hand," said Mrs. Althea.

"Ah, there are so many!" said she, snatching up her work. "All this stitching must come out."

"Thus one trouble entails another," said Mrs. Althea. "Many people hate undoing their own work. Give it me; I will pick it out for you."

"Oh, no, thank you—I *must* be doing something;" and, sighing, she set to work very industriously.

"A heavy sigh for a few false stitches," said Mrs. Althea.

"Ah, it was not for them!" said Pamela.

"For what then?"

"Dear Mrs. Althea, if I dared, I would say you were very pertinacious!"

"And so you *do* say, in that pretty periphrasis! Well, I mean to be pertinacious, till I know what vexes you. Nothing ever vexes *me* so, dear, as seeing those vexed whom I love."

"It is not vexing, exactly," said Pamela, with tears starting into her eyes, "but I don't see my way clear."

"That happens to every one, at some time or other, my dear Pamela; and a very great trial it is."

"Oh, it is, indeed! You see, we are such a large family."

"Like as the arrows in the hand of a giant, even so are the young children," repeated Mrs. Althea. "'Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.'"

"If he has plenty of money to bring them

up on," said Pamela; "otherwise, I'm afraid, they are arrows that pierce him."

"Not if they are good, obedient, and loving," said Mrs. Althea. "A great responsibility, of course, they are; but yet they bring their joys with their troubles. I'll answer for it, your mother never wished to change with Kitty or me; and if you were to marry, her heartfelt desire would be to see you the mother of a fine family."

"Like Mrs. Primrose," said Pamela, laughing:—"Well, upon my word, Mrs. Primrose, you have the finest children in the whole country!"

"I am sure that might be said to Mrs. Bohun without compliment," said Mrs. Althea.

"And then mamma ought to say, 'Aye, neighbour, they're as heaven made them—handsome enough, if good enough; for handsome is that handsome does!' and bid us hold up our heads!"

"You see, that book has taken hold of you, after all, as works of real genius always do."

"Oh, the book is a pretty book—I like it very much; but I do think all the women in it vulgar."

"Well, but to return to the matter in hand; I am surprised to hear an affectionate girl like you grumbling at having so many brothers and sisters."

"That may be because I am an affectionate daughter, Mrs. Althea."

"You do not dislike children in a general way, then, and consider them pests and plagues?"

"Oh, no! I am very fond of them. You know, the baby, while we had one, was seldom out of my arms; and now that they are getting older, and can talk, and play, and say funny things, and learn lessons, I find them even still more interesting. Indeed, mamma thinks I have a gift for teaching;—it is only because I love it."

"Love teaching your younger brothers and sisters?"

"Yes, and other children too, in an inferior degree, though poor children are so dirty. Do you know, Mrs. Althea, I should like to be a governess; only I'm afraid mamma would not like to part with me, and could not very well spare me. The thought has often crossed me, only I have not known how to bring it out. It sprang up when papa said yesterday evening, 'your mother and Prudence *must* do without you some of these days.' I thought he was looking forward to my working for them after his death. But I don't want to wait for that."

And she put her head down on her arms, and cried bitterly.

"Why should you?" said Mrs. Althea feelingly, "why should you?"

"Oh, Mrs. Althea, do ask them to let me go

out at once, will you? and work now instead of *then*? while I am young, and strong, and cheerful. Perhaps both of them may live the longer for it, instead of wearing themselves out as they are doing now. Put it to them so that they can't help seeing it in the right light, and don't let me hear anything about it till they say yes, for I'm weak and can't stand it!"

"Certainly I will, since you wish it, though I am quite surprised you find the subject other than an easy one."

"I am too much interested in it. Directly I try to begin, something swells in my throat. And if we were to attempt talking it over, I know I should cry; and there would be the end of it! For they would think I could not bear to leave home, and so would not let me go!"

"Well, Pamela, but what kind of situation do you feel equal to? You would not like one in the West Indies, for instance!"

"Surely not."

"Nor yet at the Land's End?"

"No, not beyond reach of a messenger from home in case of any emergency. At any rate, not beyond a day's post."

"And yet, being near home and not in it, might produce a hankering."

"Am I hankering now?"

"No, but this is very different; you are here only for a little while."

"Well, 'Jacob served Laban seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him as seven days, for the love he bare unto her.' What strong affections he must have had, Mrs. Althea! How happy those seven years must have been to him! And I feel as if seven years of industry might seem but as seven days to me, for the love I bear to my father and mother."

"And you will be quite young, even then. Quite young enough to marry."

"I can't bear marriage to be put into connexion with this question," said Pamela with disgust.

"How old would you like your pupils to be?" said Mrs. Althea. "Twelve or fourteen?"

"Dear Mrs. Althea, consider!—*I* am only eighteen."

"Ten or eight, then, suppose; and not too many of them."

"No—Three little girls between six and ten, I think I could manage."

"Three docile little girls."

"I'd make them docile!"

"Humph! Perhaps you would prefer some who require breaking in!"

"No, I should not prefer it; but I would not mind it."

"Now we are getting into a ring—Three little girls, or boys?"

"I would not mind one of the three being a boy such as Roger."

"Between the ages of six and ten; whether docile or otherwise—Within a day's post of home. Salary—"

"Anything I could get, to begin with."

"Salary no object at first, so much as a comfortable home. Well, I think that might do. Let us consider all the eligible families within our ken. There are no children at the Hall . . ."

"Nor at Beechenshade, nor the Hollies."

"Humph!—Bever Hollow—I don't know the Glyns."

"But papa does," cried Pamela with sudden animation, "and there are two nice little girls there, who would suit me exactly. But I suppose they don't want a governess yet." And she sighed.

"John Twiddy has brought you this parcel, miss," said Hannah, coming in, "and he waits to know if there's anything he can take back for you to the Rectory."

"Oh yes!" cried Pamela, and she started up and ran up-stairs.

"Let John Twiddy come in here when I ring," said Mrs. Althea; and taking up her pen, she wrote the following little note:—

"DEAR MR. BOHUN,

"I as nearly as possible let out the secret. Do let me tell the child all. She is quite prepared for it, and nothing is so injurious to the

health as suspense. With kindest regards to
Mrs. Bohun,

“Yours always truly,

“ALTHEA HALL.”

Then she rang the bell for the butter-badger, and had a chat with him, till Pamela came in with her packet for home.

In the afternoon, George Mildmay called, and remained about twice as long as usual; which made Mrs. Althea arrive privately at the conclusion, that however much he liked the old lady, he liked the young lady more.

George mentioned that he had been invited, rather late in the day, to join the Hall dinner-party, and did not seem much flattered by the impression that it was only to fill a gap.

CHAPTER XII.

Sifting.

Retirement is, I believe, the best state for the mind of man ; solitude, almost the worst. In complete solitude the eye wants objects, the heart wants attachments, the understanding wants reciprocation. Where the intercourse is very unequal, society is something even worse than solitude.—HANNAH MORE.

MRS. Althea lay silently cogitating for some time after George's departure, and at length said—

“ What can have made you take up such strong opinions against matrimony, Pamela ? ”

“ I ? ” said Pamela, colouring very deeply and suddenly ; “ who has made you think so ? ”

“ That is no answer.”

“ I suppose I owe the question to Mr. Forest,” said Pamela, with pique.

“ He had nothing to do with it.”

“ More goose, then, I, for supposing he had,” muttered Pamela.

“ You suggested it to me yourself. When I said you would be quite young enough to marry, at five and twenty, you said. ‘ I can’t

bear marriage to be brought into connexion with this question!"

"Not as a matter of business, I meant," said Pamela. "Dear Mrs. Althea, it argued anything but a low opinion of marriage, which I think far too sacred a thing to be considered merely as affording a more or less comfortable home than governessing."

"Why, yes; that was not the light in which I had any intention of viewing it. There are such things, I suppose you admit, as exceedingly happy marriages."

"Certainly; and if I were so silly as to be hoping much for one of that kind, I should think it a pity to wait to five-and-twenty."

"But, shut up in a school-room, you see you will have no chance of one as long as you are a governess."

"Certainly not: I have thought of that, as much as it needs to be thought of, which is very little; but it has not deterred me from taking my part. If God chooses me to marry, I shall, at his fit time and no other."

"You speak quite like a predestinarian."

"However, I speak truth."

"And common-sense, too. How well would it be for many girls, my dear Pamela, if they took your way of considering the question, and only busied themselves with their immediate concerns; remembering that 'Duties are ours, events are God's!'"

"Oh yes, it puts every care for the future to rest!"

"Still, if you remained at home, it would afford many opportunities of seeing and being seen."

"How can you talk in that way, Mrs. Althea? Seen by whom? By young farmer Hawthorn, and old farmer Grubbs, and Mr. Spitchcock, and Ralph Hieover, and Peter Watts!"

"Not a very eligible list of admirers, certainly. Can't you think of any one more respectable?"

"No."

"I don't think you are speaking the truth."

"I suppose you are thinking of Mr. Tomkins," said Pamela, blushing a little. "He would not do."

"I never heard of Mr. Tomkins. Come, you must have had some better admirer than that."

"Dear Mrs. Althea, how you do tease one!"

"Come, Pamela, think!"

"I do believe you know something all this while;" said Pamela, with still deepening colour. "What a shame!"

"What is a shame?"

"Why, for any one to tell you a thing he promised to say nothing about."

"Nobody has done so. I was only guessing."

"Shame on you, then, Mrs. Althea!"

"Yes, I was guessing; and you showed me

there was something to guess. However, Pamela, I force no confidence. I have nothing but your welfare and happiness at heart, my love."

"Don't talk in that way, please!"

"I will not. Everything shall be between us as before; as if this subject had never arisen."

"That cannot be, now," said Pamela, ruefully, after some minutes' silence. "You have found out, or think you have found out, a secret, and you cannot forget having done so, I fear, though you may say nothing about it."

"Perhaps not."

"Well, then, dear Mrs. Althea, let me try to tell you. But, in the first place, don't you consider, that providing I devote myself for the sake of my family, the way of my doing so may be left to myself?"

"Not if you think of devoting yourself like Curtius, by leaping into a gulf;—in other words, by anything tantamount to a moral or mental suicide."

"And a self-sacrifice by marriage would be that very thing!"

"Yes, I think it would."

"Oh, thank you! Now I can speak out. Good, well-meaning Mr. Forest, considering my father and mother encumbered, I fancy, by too large a family, has thought he might relieve them of one responsibility at least, by making

me Mrs. Forest. Now, you see, Mrs. Althea, he is not quite so old as Robin Grey ; nay, he is rather what ladies call a popular, personable, middle-aged man ; and in any other light I like him very well ; but in *this* light I can't endure him ! ”

“ I should think not ! ” cried Mrs. Althea.

“ Oh ! thank you for saying so ! ”

“ No, Pamela ; if it had been George Mildmay . . . ”

“ Mr. Mildmay is nothing to me,” said Pamela, blushing ; “ he has nothing whatever to do with the question. We now need say no more about it. You have entirely relieved me by what you have said—I feared you would think me acting selfishly and imprudently in refusing what people call ‘ so good a settlement ; ’ but, since I have you on my side, I will tell papa and mamma that I am ready to go out as soon as a good situation offers.”

“ A good situation *will* offer, depend upon it,” said Mrs. Althea, sagaciously.

“ You look as if you had one *in petto*,” said Pamela, laughing. “ Be that as it may, I shall let things take their course.” And she went away, singing.

CHAPTER XIII.

Decision.

Where'er this garden-fence is wound,
So subtly are our eyes beguiled,
We see not nor suspect a bound,
No more than in some forest wild.
The sight is free as air ! or crost
Only by art in nature lost.

Apt emblem, for reproof of pride,
This delicate inclosure shows,
Of modest kindness, that would hide
The firm protection she bestows :
Of manners, like its unseen fence
Ensuring peace and innocence !

WORDSWORTH.

" **P**AMELA, you have a pretty voice," said Mrs. Kitty at tea-time ; " it only wants a little cultivation."

" What it can't have, it must continue to want," said Pamela.

" Yes, but, my dear, you need not say ' it can't have,' with Aprilli's Solfeggi in the house and me to give you a lesson. I will hunt up the book presently, and open the piano."

"I should not be surprised if you found a mouse's nest in it," said Mrs. Althea, smiling.

"Nonsense, Althea! As if the furniture was never dusted!"

"I can see a cobweb over the key-hole, at any rate."

"Scandal, I'm sure," cried Mrs. Kitty, starting up, and flying at it with her pocket-handkerchief.

"Take care, take care!" cried Pamela, running to the rescue. "I'll help to move the things off it, Mrs. Kitty. Sure enough, there runs a spider. What shall I do with this glass globe? And this case of Brazilian beetles? Pretty creatures! I never saw them in a full light before. How they glitter!—I'll move the books, Mrs. Kitty; you'll be smothered in dust."

"There's none to speak of," persisted Mrs. Kitty.

"Enough to sneeze at," said Mrs. Althea, as Pamela gave two sudden sneezes.

"My dear, you've a cold in your head," said Mrs. Kitty. "Why will you sit in the arbour so often?"

"I don't know that I shall, any more, Mrs. Kitty. My associations with it are not pleasant."

"Now for it, then," said Mrs. Kitty; "where's the key?"

"It only sticks—" said Mrs. Althea. "Put out a little strength."

"It's *locked*," said Mrs. Kitty positively; putting out considerable strength at the same time. She nearly fell backwards as the piano flew open. Pamela received her in her arms.

"My goodness, what's this?" cried Mrs. Kitty, snatching up something withinside. It was a half-eaten apple, very mouldy. She burst into a fit of laughter. "I remember very well," said she, "about a year ago,—no, it could not be so long ago as that!—I was eating an apple, when I saw Sir John Tyree coming in; and having no better resource at hand, I popped it into the piano, intending to finish it when he was gone."

"Ah, murder will out," said Mrs. Althea, highly amused. "Sir John's last visit was more than twelve months ago."

"My dear Althea, it could not be so, because —well, it don't matter. Where there's no wrong, shame needn't last long. Or, if you like it better, where there's no blame, there need be no shame. Come along, Pamela; we're quite clean now and fit for immediate service. Here's the book,—follow my lead. Now then; begin with *Do. Fie!* what a jingle!"

In fact, the piano being miserably out of tune, besides having lost several strings, the first chord played by Mrs. Kitty's strong fingers produced a crash which sent Mrs. Althea's hands to her ears, and made her shake with laughter.

"Kitty, you'll be the death of me," said she. "I really cannot stand that."

"Where's the tuning-fork?" said Mrs. Kitty. "However, tuning a piano is always rather trying to the nerves, and here seem a good many strings broken; so I believe we may as well leave it alone, this time. But really, Pamela, this has in its day been a capital instrument."

"Ah, like its mistress," said Mrs. Althea with a sigh and a smile—"some good tones, a pleasant touch, once upon a time; but that time has long past."

"No, it has not," said Pamela.

"She's fishing for a compliment," said Mrs. Kitty. "Don't humour her."

Mrs. Althea, however, had been set afloat in a sea of what John Bunyan called "similitudes," and she went on stringing them together, without minding what was said.

"Neither of them were beauties," said she, "and it was not every one that could bring out their best tones—sometimes they were altogether out of tune, and jarred sadly—at other times, a single key would go dumb, and it was of no use to hammer on it. Now and then, they would get rubbed up and fresh strung, and come out quite strong at Christmas parties and family festivities; but they never were brilliant, after all, and were best adapted for 'a brave tune set to solemn words,' 'psalms, and hymns,

and spiritual songs.' The last time, however, that I touched the keys of that old instrument, I thought its tones were fuller, mellower, and sweeter than ever. O that it may be so with mine."

A short silence ensued; broken by Mrs. Kitty's exclaiming, "Come, Pamela, do read us something, and let it be instructive, child!"

"Kitty, does not Pamela remind you of Kneller's picture of aunt Diana?" said Mrs. Althea.

"I protest, now you name it, she certainly does," said Mrs. Kitty. "If she had but the shepherdess' hat."

"That would be the hat, not the face," said Mrs. Althea.

"But I have an old cherry-coloured sacque of aunt Diana's in my curiosity-box," continued Mrs. Kitty, "and I declare Hannah shall bring it down; and I will dress up Pamela, and make her look as like aunt Diana as one egg to another."

"Aye, do," said Mrs. Althea; and under Mrs. Kitty's auspices, Hannah, with one or two grunts of dissatisfaction, brought down the curiosity-trunk, and thumped it down on the rug, within an inch of Pamela's feet. Pamela gave an amused look, and retreated as gracefully as if she had learnt to dance.

This trunk proved worthy of its name. It was full, to repletion, of curiosities; and each

had its pedigree; so that it was a good while before the dressing-up took place. First, there were some wonderfully yellow fine laces and muslins; then the sacque; then a chintz gown and coats; then a black silk calash; then, a mode cloak.—Now, a large Indian fan; then, a pair of high-heeled shoes; sundry rolls of faded ribbons; stockings with scarlet clocks; mittens that drew up to the elbow; an old sweet-bag, that only smelt of snuff; an étui, a little muff, a black velvet half-mask trimmed with lace, that had *really* been used at a masquerade! Pamela's only disappointment was that there was no hoop.

They were all very merry, talking and laughing, and Pamela was just equipped like the bride in *Marriage-à-la-Mode*, when Mrs. Althea cried "What's that?" and turned pale.

Mrs. Kitty repeated, "What?" and turned red.

A man's voice was heard at the front door.
He was saying to Hannah,

"I was afraid they would think it was at Collington."

"It's Mr. Mildmay!" ejaculated Pamela, with a dismayed look at her friends; and sweeping up her own habiliments from the floor, she cast them into Mrs. Kitty's curtained recess, just as George put his head in at the door.

"May I come in?" said he, looking round

rather curiously, but without seeing Pamela—“They are burning weeds out beyond Platchet, and it looks so exactly in the direction of Collington that—”

“Collington!” cried Pamela.

“Bless my heart!” exclaimed he, with a start. Then, after an amazed look which made them all laugh: “Upon my word, Miss Bohun, said he, “the Mildmays have never liked being frightened; and really at first I didn’t know whether you were a ghost or a guy!”

“Why, did not you know I was staying here?” said Pamela, looking provoked at his stupidity. “Where’s the fire?”

“See!” said he, going to the front window, and drawing back the curtains. There was a lurid, red glare towards the horizon, against a black sky.

“It does look fearful!” said Mrs. Althea.

“And very much as if it were at Collington,” said Pamela, very gravely. “Thank you very much, Mr. Mildmay, for coming to tell me—us, I mean. There! how it blazes up! It is very awful-looking. You are quite sure it is not near the rectory?”

“Quite.”

“There, now it is gone out quite suddenly!” said Mrs. Althea. Turning her head, she saw George was looking intently, not towards the fire, but at Pamela.

“There is surely,” said he, catching Mrs.

Althea's eye, "something out of the common in Miss Bohun's appearance to-night."

"Aye, I'm going to a masquerade," said Pamela, laughing, and putting the mask over her face.

"With Mr. Bohun's approval, of course," said George, very gravely.

"Why, you can't believe me serious!" cried Pamela, indignantly.

"Then why should you believe *me* so?" said he, looking much amused. "Hallo, I nearly stumbled over this trunk—I would rather set other people's bones than my own."

"Hannah has put it there, just on purpose for people to stumble over, one would think," said Mrs. Kitty, dragging it out of the way.

"Don't trouble yourself, Mrs. Kitty; I'm off. I only looked in to prevent an alarm."

"And thereby occasioned one, Mr. George! for Althea verily thought you were a house-breaker, and turned as white as death; whereas, the shutters being shut, and she sleeping at the back of the house, we should never have known of the bonfire, sir, if you had not told us."

"Hum! then I seem to have been rather officious," said George.

"Oh no, indeed!" said Pamela, "I assure you I feel grateful to you if no one else does; for my window faces the fire, and I always look out before I go to bed."

"Miss Bohun, upon my word, you look very—peculiar, and charming, and so forth, in that comical dress."

Pamela did not say a word, but looked a little put out, and lighted a candle, as if she were going away to change her costume.

"No, don't go," said George, taking it out of her hand, and using the extinguisher, "for I must."

"No, don't," said Mrs. Kitty; "but stay to supper, for there's a little meat pie."

"What sort of meat, Mrs. Kitty?"

"Veal, sir; with shreds of ham, hard eggs, and a delicate crust; since you are so very inquisitive."

"These are the things ladies eat among themselves," groaned George. "No wonder they are so often on our books! Well, Mrs. Kitty, it is not every meat pie that I would trust myself to eat at this time of night,—but since I know the lady that made it, and—being veal, *not* pork, you see,—and for a few other considerations,—I think I'll be guided by your advice, and stay to try it."

Pamela looked amazed, and then amused. "What are you going to do with your horse?" said she.

"Do you particularly wish to know, Miss Bohun?"

"Why, it is not a secret, is it?"

"To gratify you, then, I will tell you that I stabled him before I came in."

"Then you meant to stay!" exclaimed Pamela.

Mrs. Althea laughed till she was exhausted.

"Pamela!" said Mrs. Kitty, triumphantly; "he scented the pie!"

The next morning, Mrs. Kitty challenged Pamela to help her move all her geraniums into the sun, and was accoutring herself in her gardening-trim, which was convenient, but not becoming, when she exclaimed—

"Who can this smart man be, riding up to the gate? I'm not fit to be seen, so I shall decamp. Come along, Pamela."

Mrs. Althea thought Pamela might as well have remained, but she followed her leader before there was time to say so; and Mrs. Althea had not spent two minutes in speculating who the stranger might be, when Mr. Glyn was announced and shown in.

His address was pleasant and prepossessing. He apologized for calling, and for his mother's not having called long before, as soon as she had heard of Mrs. Althea's being unable to leave the house; but they had understood that she had so large a circle of friends and acquaintance, comprising the best society in the county, that in her state of health the intrusion of strangers could hardly be acceptable.

Mrs. Althea replied she was always glad to see those who took any interest in her, whenever

she was well enough; and that of late she had been much more free from pain.

Mr. Glyn hoped it gave her friends reason to look forward to her recovery. His mother would be very glad to wait upon her, though she called upon few. She was healthy for her time of life, but not very locomotive—perhaps not very sociable. She found her almost exclusive occupation within the house, and in looking after her two little grand-daughters, who were now becoming almost too much for her.

Mrs. Althea thought that Mrs. Glyn would probably find great relief in committing them to the charge of a thoroughly well-principled, good-humoured governess. Children could hardly be too early removed from the influence of servants; and yet their high spirits, which it was a pity to curb, were frequently the occasion of more noise than a person advanced in years could comfortably bear.

Mr. Glyn said, "Precisely." That was just his mother's case. He could not bear to see her suffering from his little girls' innocent merriment; and yet they were now beyond the nursery. He had suggested a governess to his mother: she had at first demurred; then entertained the idea; but was doubtful of finding one sufficiently cheerful, and yet steady. She had spoken of it to the Reverend Mr. Bohun; and Mr. Bohun had thought it might be difficult, but not hopeless, to find such a young

person, and had promised to bear it in mind. Afterwards, it had occurred to Mrs. Glyn, that as Mr. Bohun's emoluments were far inferior to his merits and to the size of his family, it might possibly be desirable to him to place out one of his own daughters in a quiet, respectable family; but she felt some delicacy in opening the question, as he already knew her want, and had not suggested its supply. However, he had met Mr. Bohun that morning, scarcely an hour ago; and Mr. Bohun had himself entered on the subject with great frankness, and said how much pleasure it would give Mrs. Bohun and himself, if their daughter should be permitted to undertake the care of the two little girls.

"I immediately caught at the offer," said Mr. Glyn; "and, as it then appeared that Miss Bohun herself had never been spoken to on the subject, but that it was likely she would give it a favourable hearing, especially under your influence, I thought I would ride over here, and broach it to her or to you myself. Her father said we should find she had had but an old-fashioned sort of education—the education of circumstances; but I told him we could allow for that."

"I have lived long enough," said Mrs. Althea, "to learn that in many cases the education of circumstances is the best."

"In what way, may I ask, have you learnt that?" said Mr. Glyn.

" Well, in the first place, I was left much to myself as a child ; and I now find that what I taught myself, or what I learnt accidentally or providentially, under strong impulse, has been best remembered, and most useful. To be self-taught, or taught by snatches, is a wonderful advantage, counterbalanced, in some degree, of course, by subordinate disadvantages."

" To an ardent, inquiring disposition, they may, perhaps, be subordinate," said Mr. Glyn, doubtfully.

" Perhaps such an irregular course is less favourable to the morals than to the intellect," said Mrs. Althea. " We do not so naturally seek God as seek knowledge."

" There's deep truth in that," said he, quickly. " But Miss Bohun would, doubtless, have the best of religious education from her father. I have no fears in that direction."

" You need have none," said Mrs. Althea. " And in finding her a true Christian, only think how much that includes ! Christianity teaches the finest manners ; for it inculcates true gentleness, it represses vulgarity, it insists on purity and on truth. Were I a father or a mother, I should think more of these graces than of a certain amount of music, Italian, and ' the use of the globes.' "

" Besides, my little girls will not want much in that way yet," said Mr. Glyn. " An intelligent young woman may easily keep ahead of

them for some time. I am inclined to think that too much is generally attempted in modern education."

"It attempts at once too much and too little," said Mrs. Althea. "It often ignores common sense, imagination, feeling, and health,—reverence, and implicit, affectionate obedience."

Mr. Glyn laughed at Mrs. Althea's list of evils. "I believe there is but too much truth in what you say," returned he; "and, for my part, as I certainly don't aspire to make my girls professors, I shall be content to see them acquiring solid good for some years to come, without too impatiently hastening them to school for accomplishments; especially as I shall not readily part with my merry little playmates."

"Why should you?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Oh, boys are pushed on more at school, and I suppose the same holds good with girls."

"Ah, that pushing!" said Mrs. Althea, smiling.

"You don't approve of it? Well, there's no need in some cases. My little Mab will probably get forward without it; Adela, I believe, will require emulation."

"I would try better incentives first, though," said Mrs. Althea. "There are mechanical difficulties in the way of educating different classes of minds separately in schools; but the comparative facility for this is one of the grand advantages of home education. For my part,

I hate the very names of emulation and competition."

" You do ? " cried Mr. Glyn, looking highly amused. " Why, they are the very life of public schools ! "

" There let them dwell then," said Mrs. Althea, " without invading smaller circles."

" What ' better incentives ' can you substitute for them ? "

" Let Pamela show you," said Mrs. Althea.

" Do you mean Miss Bohun ? Well, if her plans answer, I shall not interfere. Can I see her ? "

" I will send for her," said Mrs. Althea, ringing the bell.

It was soon found, however, that Pamela was not with Mrs. Kitty, but had walked into the village; and Mr. Glyn, in the course of a few minutes, took his leave.

Mrs. Kitty bounced in, directly after, in a state of great excitement.

" Only think ! " cried she, " malting barley up to three-and-sixpence a bushel ; and grinding, three-and-three ! I shall make my fortune ! Didn't I tell you how good a thing it would be to put down plenty of it ? But you are knocked up, my lady, and must have something to do you good."

Mrs. Althea was beginning to recover herself, when Pamela came in with Mr. Bohun.

" I've picked up papa on the common," said

she gaily; "and he has told me the very thing I am glad to hear—that Mr. Glyn wants me to be his little girls' governess."

"And Mr. Glyn has been here in the interim," said Mrs. Althea, "and told me the same thing."

"Well," muttered Mrs. Kitty, "if nothing comes of it—" She thought better of what she was going to say, and broke off her sentence.

"But something will come of it," said Mr. Bohun, "since all parties are agreed. And Pamela, in leaving her home for the sake of those dear to her, will be better loved by us than ever."

He kissed her fondly as he spoke. She looked deeply gratified, and no tear started to her eye.

"Ah, papa," said she softly, "we only seem just to have learnt to know one another."

All were silent for a few minutes. Then it was arranged that as Pamela's time would be short, and there were many things to be done and thought of, she should return home the next day.

CHAPTER XIV.

New Lights.

A perpetually recurring small expense is more to be avoided than an incidental great one. The narrow-minded woman succeeds tolerably in the *filling up*, but never in the outline. She is made up of detail, but destitute of plan.—*HANNAH MORE.*

“ MRS. Althea, how much—I mean, how little—do you think a fellow may marry on?”

“ Well, George, that depends on what sort of a fellow he is. The Reverend Robert Walker, of Seathwaite, married on a curacy of five pounds a year, with a cottage attached.”

“ Starved ; or had a private fortune ?”

“ No, he did whatever came to hand—taught the parish children eight hours daily in the church, sitting within the communion-rails and spinning wool while they learnt their tasks ; carried his wool on his back to market, no matter in what weather :—in the evenings, wrote wills and conveyances for his parishioners, for the little remuneration they could afford to give.”

“Singular character!”

“He dug his own garden, looked after two cows and a few sheep, and tilled his glebe-land. He brought up eight industrious and affectionate children, was a good husband, father, and parish priest, and read the Scriptures and preached with such fervour and unction as to reach the hardest, most indifferent heart.”

“Well, this is rather wide of the mark.”

“What think you of the genteel economy of Mr. Peregrine Langton, who lived in Lincolnshire, on an annuity of two hundred pounds? The rent of his house, with two or three small fields, was twenty-eight pounds; his family consisted of a sister, who paid him eighteen pounds a year for her board, and a niece. He kept two livery servants and two maids; a post-chariot and three horses. He kept a good table, and entertained his friends as frequently as they entertained him; dressed well, saved something, and gave something to the poor.”

“Ah, I remember that in Boswell. Never could make out how he managed it.”

“One thing was, he never kept a running account. He paid his bills weekly, and his servants and landlord quarterly, so that he always knew what he had in hand.”

“Capital fellow. Well, Mrs. Althea, all this sounds practical, but not very practicable; so I'll just change the subject and go off to the dinner at the Hall. Famous dinner, as far as

eating went, but queer people to eat. Not the *élite*, save and except the noble Mr. Glyn, who sat at Miss Hill's right hand, and played the agreeable to her. He couldn't draw her out much, though; for why? there's so little to draw. I sat next to Miss Rhoda; and a tolerably nice girl she is."

"Come, I admire that. She is certainly above the average of our belles."

"Well, she is gentle, and girlish; cheerful, and unaffected. Pretty well read, too, and up to the affairs of the day, yet not obliged to make them her staple; and has ideas of her own."

"Oh, she has, has she? What sort of ideas, pray?"

"Ma'am, you may be incredulous and ironical; but Miss Rhoda certainly has some original ideas."

"As, for instance?—"

"As, for instance, that much better conversation is to be found in books, in novels, than in real life."

"Well, may it not be so?"

"Why, 'to speak like a book' is the essence of bad taste! What! the preaching of Tremaine and his college friend to be tolerated in real life?"

"That was not table-talk, but the serious debate of friend with friend."

"Well then, the light, frothy stuff in fashion-

able novels, professing to show up high life which the writers have never seen. No, I consider Miss Rhoda clearly wrong. Any way, imitations can never come up to originals; therefore, imaginary conversations can never equal real ones."

"In *what?* In closeness of thought, and neatness and felicity of expression?"

"Ah, well, those we may find better in a book, but not the summer-lightning wit that comes and goes 'ere one can say it lightens.' Again,—she fancies people are really better, more virtuous, in the country than in town! You and I know, unfortunately, there is not much to choose between them."

"An innocent illusion,—and not altogether illusory. Country influences are the best. However, there is no influence that really cleanses the heart but that of the Holy Spirit."

"And she thinks women are no better than men!"

"I am afraid we are both bad enough. You seem to have got upon some tolerably tough subjects between the courses."

"But what did she know of them?"

"Well, it was rather presumptuous of my little friend; but we may presume her to have read a little, in the school-room, of such persons as Queen Jezebel and Catherine de' Medicis."

"At all events, we kept up the ball famously,

and I thought Mr. Glyn looked our way now and then as if he envied me."

"Sheer conceit, George! I suppose Miss Hill, too, looked at her cousin, now and then, as if envying *her*. No commoner trait of self complacence than fancying that other people are envying us."

"Well, but, Mrs. Althea, I must tell you of an extraordinary thing I saw as I came along to-day—"

"Forgive me, George, if I ask you to wait one moment,—but here comes Hannah for the tax-gatherer's money, which Kitty left with me before she went out. . . . Now, then, I am all attention, all expectation;—an *extraordinary* thing? Dear me, what could it be?"

"I saw Miss Bohun, walking along, hand in hand with the two little Glyns, near Bever Hollow!"

"Is *that* your extraordinary news? What of it?"

"What of it? Why, the distance from her own home was considerable, and I did not think she knew the Glyns—nay, I am sure she didn't a very little while ago! And here was she, walking with the children, just like a servant."

"That, I will take upon me to say, she was not, George. Pamela Bohun would never look like a servant, let her perform what useful office she might. She is the children's governess."

“Governess?” said George, changing colour, and pausing. “How long,” said he, at length, “has that been?”

“Quite recently. Her motives do her the highest honour.”

“This is sudden—I was not prepared—that is, I was not expecting—”

He broke off; and seeing Mrs. Althea looking at him earnestly, started up, colouring a little, and said:—

“I have paid you quite a visitation. Good bye.”

“Stay. Are you really thinking ill of Miss Bohun for endeavouring to lighten her parents’ burthen?”

“Dear me, far from it; only it places her in a different position, you see; and, altogether, I wish she had not done it.”

“I had not thought you so worldly.”

“You need not think me so now, ma’am; but you must see that Miss Bohun has taken a measure that will stick by her for life. If she leaves at the month’s end, and marries a duke at the year’s end, the Glynns will always be able to say, ‘Oh, yes, she was our governess.’”

“And if they can and do, where’s the harm? Good-bye, George; I am ashamed of the view you take of it. I had thought better things of you.”

CHAPTER XV.

Pamela's Cogitations.

Yet who can tell ! Within that breast,
That pure and hallowed cell
Of a heart where grief should never rest,
Some latent woes may dwell.
For grief may lurk in the throbbing heart
That is pure as the mountain stream,
And tears from the fount of eyes depart
That are bright as the morning beam,
And the bosom may seem as light as air,
Yet misery find a dwelling there !

DR. A. T. THOMSON.

THE hardest transition of the young is from the warmed, lighted-up church of Imagination, into the cold night-air of Duty. Dazzled with romantic instances of self-devotion, they incline to wait in idleness for similar opportunities of exerting themselves; disdaining or disgusted with that regular but unobtrusive kind of moral defence which, like the Chinese wall, is destitute of sufficient grandeur to attract the eye ; yet is interminable in length and surmounts all obstacles.

Pamela Bohun had early learnt to endure hardness ; but she was now placed in a new

position, the trials of which were wholly different from those her imagination had presented. Fortunately she found herself quite able to meet them. The routine of teaching, the confinement, the monotony, were either lightly borne by her, or well supported by a sense of duty ; she was, however, very homesick ; and continually longing for some glimpse and speech of those she loved. She was unaccustomed, also, to the conventionalities of a large household, but not over-sensitive or ready to fancy slights, owing to her subordinate position in it ; and though she would not, in any circumstances, have put herself forward in the family circle, there was a native self-possession, wholly distinct from conceit, which gave her a frankness and fearlessness of being suspected of doing wrong when she was meaning to do right, that at first gave Mrs. Glyn a little umbrage, and at length, no little confidence in her.

When she went up to her neat, snug little room the first night,—the room which had once been Mrs. Kitty's, and which had old-fashioned prints of Versailles on the wall, and a Dutch-tiled fire-place,—there was a brisk fire burning in the grate ! Oh, luxury for a governess ! Pamela had never had a fire in her bedroom before, even on cold nights ; and how luxurious it now was, to draw a comfortable old easy-chair before it, and sit musing and gazing on the glowing embers ; and in a leisurely way, take

down her long, redundant hair, and brush it deliberately. How comfortably she could finish unpacking, and making her various little arrangements: how gratefully take out her Bible and read it longer than usual; then gaze into the fire and muse again—then kneel down and pray—then go to bed and lie down quite peacefully and contentedly, and bless Mrs. Glyn for this unexpected indulgence, and feel sure all would go well; and with home in her heart and a prayer for home on her lips, fall into dreamless, refreshing sleep.

A sack or two of coals during the winter makes no great difference to a moderately easy housekeeper; and how much gratitude and comfort may they promote; and what a character for kindliness and liberality may they establish!

Pamela's meeting with George Mildmay happened thus. She was telling the little girls what pretty nosegays might be made of dead leaves of every variety of colour and shade, from the gayest yellow and scarlet to dark brown, myrtle green, and mulberry colour—"murray colour," as the old name was,—when suddenly, a surprised voice behind her smote her ear, with

"Miss Bohun!"

and turning round, she saw George Mildmay riding close to the path.

"So far from home?" he said.

"Yes—" said she, without having anything

else immediately to say; for something inquisitive and distrustful in his eye made her embarrassed, she knew not why.

"All well at home, I hope?" said he.

"Quite well, thank you, I believe."

"You believe? are you, then, staying at Bever Hollow?"

"Yes."

"She lives with us!" said the little Mabel, explanatorily.

George looked quickly at her. Pamela blushed. Why should she? Why should he bow more distantly than usual, and ride off? Pamela could not tell; she could only feel fluttered and uncomfortable, as if he had found out something she had not cared he should know; whereas, up to that minute, it had never occurred to her to care at all about the matter.

"Go on—go on with what you were telling us, please!" cried Adela.

"What was it, dear?"

"About the winter garland on your mamma's birthday."

"See! there's a squirrel, running to that tree!"

Away flew the children; and Pamela, instead of thinking over Mr. Mildmay's equivocal tone, look, and bow, stoutly set herself to repeat those noble lines in Wordsworth's 'Ode to Duty.'—

‘Stern lawgiver ! yet dost thou wear
The godhead’s most benignant grace,
Nor know we anything so fair
As is the smile upon thy face.
Flowers laugh before thee in their beds,
And fragrance in thy footing treads :
Thou dost preserve the stars from wrong,
And the most ancient heavens through thee are fresh
and strong.’

“ You all look merry enough,” said Mr. Glyn, coming up with the party just as they reached the escutcheoned gate. Each hand was instantly appropriated by his little girls.

“ Well, Miss Bohun, how have they got on to-day ? Have they given you any trouble ? ”

“ I did not consider if it were trouble or not,” said Pamela, “ for we all liked what we were about.”

“ Yes, papa, Miss Bohun says she likes teaching,” cried Adela, “ and she likes play too. We had such a game of play in the hall ! ”

“ Yes, for we thought it would rain and we should lose our walk,” said Mabel ; “ but it cleared up afterwards, so grandmamma said we might come out.”

“ I have been round your way,” said Mr. Glyn to Pamela ; “ and just looked in at the vicarage, for I knew I should be more welcome if I brought you word that all were well.”

“ Oh, thank you ! ” cried Pamela, brightening.

“ And there was your father, like another Hooker, rocking the cradle.” Pamela laughed.

"Not a literal wicker-cradle, I own," said Mr. Glyn, "but walking up and down the room with a little sleepy boy in his arms, whom he soon rocked to sleep. And your mother was rubbing up an old picture with sweet oil, and bringing out its beauties amazingly, while two of her children were watching the process as earnestly as Teniers' child watches the housewife scraping the carrot. We had a long chat about you, and I told them how famously we were getting on together. All sent loves; and your mother made me the bearer of this little packet for you, which, of course, you will be glad to run off with and examine." For they had just reached the hall steps.

"Oh, thank you!" cried Pamela; and, running off, all smiles, to her own room, she met Mrs. Glyn. "Was that my son, coming in with you?" said she.

"Yes, ma'am, we met him at the lodge," said Pamela cheerfully, "and he has been so kind as to call on papa and mamma, and has brought me word they are quite well."

"Oh indeed! Well, my dear, when you have changed your dress, you can come to me and read me the review that you said I should like . . . There's something frank and open in that girl," thought Mrs. Glyn as Pamela ran off, "that suits me amazingly. Not one of your mincing misses, full of self-consciousness."

The review was of Bishop Corrie's Life. Pamela presently came to the following passage:

"I feel, decidedly and painfully, that large means have *not* been of advantage to myself or my family."

"Dear me," interjected Pamela, "he could not have known how to use them then, I should think. How much he might have given away!"

"My own soul has lost much of the liveliness I once possessed in religion.' (Surely, that would not have been the case if his deeds, his alms-deeds, had kept pace with his means?) 'The willingness to labour, the readiness to attend to the poor, the pleasures of going here and there to serve others, either officially or of choice, is departed from me.'—Poor man; poor bishop."

"You have been accustomed only to see the other half of the picture, my dear," said Mrs. Glyn rather grandly, "and have fancied that all the evils of life could be remedied by riches."

"Many of them, by riches well applied," said Pamela thoughtfully.

"Whereas you see this good man found them a temptation and a burthen—"

"Like that on the camel's back, which must be unloaded before it can pass through the narrow wicket they call 'the needle's eye,'" said Pamela.

"*They?* Who?" cried Mrs. Glyn.

"People in the east.—The people of Jerusalem, I think," said Pamela. "At night, after the great gates are shut, no one can enter except through a very narrow door called 'the needle's eye;' and, if there is occasion to bring in a camel, it must be unloaded first, and can even then only squeeze through with difficulty."

"That is new to me," said Mrs. Glyn with interest,—"it throws a new light on the 'strait gate and narrow way.' You should tell the children of it."

"I will, ma'am, when we come to the passage referring to it"

"What is it you are talking of?" said Mr. Glyn, coming in and throwing himself on a sofa.

"Needles," said Pamela, rising and laying down the book.

"My dear, don't leave us in that marked way," said Mrs. Glyn in an under-tone. "I did not mean *that*, when I said . . . and besides, that was not a proper answer of yours; it was flighty, and deceived my son."

"You are right, ma'am," said Pamela contritely; and resuming her seat.

"Tell him the real thing. Miss Bohun is going to tell you something curious, Charles."

"What is it?" said he, rising and drawing near the fire. She briefly related it.

"Ha!" said he, when she had done; and that was all. He rang the bell directly she had led, and accosted the servant with,

"Tell Davies that Wellington must have a warm mash in the morning."

"Yes, sir. Dinner is on table, sir."

Mr. Glyn offered his arm to his mother. "Too bad to leave you behind," said he to Pamela.

"Thank you, I like early hours," said Pamela.

He nodded slightly, as much as to say "all right," and led his mother down stairs. Then Pamela returned to the school-room, took possession of a very easy chair, and had a luxurious reverie about home.

Her cogitations took somewhat of this form : "It must require an apprenticeship, I think, to eat hot meat, and so many other things, so late in the day,—must make people feel heavy and sleepy, what the Bible calls 'full of bread,' disinclined for any active duty or study. Whereas papa starts up from table, after his early dinner, as fresh as a lark ; and is ready to read, write, walk, talk, or work in the garden. Dear papa ! he has now just finished his tea, and taken his fireside seat, with a youngster on each knee ; Patience has put his list slippers to warm, and thrown on some fresh turfs ; Fulk is lying on the hard little couch, not quite out of the fire-light ; and mamma is knitting. And what are they all talking about ? Very likely, of me ! How nice ! Perhaps, too, of Mr. Glyn. Mamma is saying he is a personable man, but carries his

head rather high. Papa says, 'Nonsense, my dear!—would you have him *stoop*?' and bids the little ones carry their heads like Mr. Glyn, and remember they are De Bones. It was very kind of Mr. Glyn to promise papa his *Times*, only one day old, if I would take the trouble of tying it up, and giving it to Bates every morning at a certain hour. Of course I will, especially as I have been told I may put in a little note now and then. Memorandum: One of my private restrictions must be, not to encroach. When people are so kind already, I ought not to take advantages or liberties. No; it is best for those we live with and serve under to say, 'Friend, come up higher,' rather than need to be repressed. I know this loan of the *Times* will be valuable to papa, notwithstanding what he said about its tempting him to idle; because he now only has the weekly county paper, which, as he says, contains little, and that little not worth knowing. He will now know what people marry, die, get public places, make grand discoveries, what is said in parliament, what is done at the universities and in foreign countries, what new books come out, and what old ones • are sold at auctions when gentlemen of property go abroad. Papa is not a man to idle for one minute he cannot spare. And as for mamma, who has no leisure for amusing books, she will yet find it now and then for a paragraph in the *Times*, which will divert her from too anxiously

thinking how to make one penny go as far as two. How many inexpensive ways there are of showing kindness!—ways that the rich, and those, too, who are not rich, frequently neglect to improve. Here, now, Mr. Glyn says he does not care what becomes of the papers, providing they are returned to be filed at last; so that papa will be able to lend them to uncle Ned, who is confined to his arm-chair, and who really has no turn for any harder reading; and he will con them over, and forget to fret at my aunt and the maid.

“ I wonder how Prudence gets on with Fulk’s shirts. I would gladly have brought the wristbands and collars with me to stitch; but mamma said I must not give a divided attention, when I was paid for the whole; and that if I undertook them, half my thoughts would be on my pupils and half on my work. I believe she was right. The other day, when I tried a little fancy-knitting while lessons went on, I found I became impatient; and at home, where I was constantly *obliged* to do two things at once, it frequently made me feverish and captious. Mamma says, two things at once are only for her and Julius Cæsar. Governessing! how easy it is, compared with the duties of many a mother and many a daughter! How many things are made easy for us—how many taken off our hands altogether! Why, when the children are in bed, or with their old nurse, or

in the drawing-room, I am completely my own mistress!—with free access to that delightful library, and with those fine pictures to see daily! The separation from those one loves is the grand thing; and should I not be separated from them if I ~~married~~?—married Mr. Forest? Fulk will be separated from us at college, and yet he revels in the thought of going. Certainly, I do not like meeting such strange looks as Mr. Mildmay gave me this morning; but might it not have been partly my own fault? Of course he would be surprised to know I was here, if he had not been told already."

At this instant the entrance of the tea-urn put an end to the cogitations of Pamela.

CHAPTER XVI.

Rhoda's Ruminations.

O ! let the ungentle spirit learn from hence,
A small unkindness is a great offence,
Large bounties to bestow, we seldom gain,
But all may shun the guilt of giving pain.

HANNAH MORE.

" **R**EALLY, Mr. Mildmay can be very companionable when he chooses," said Charlotte Hill to her sister. " I was quite as well pleased he should have come this morning as if he had been Mr. Forest."

" Your cold is so very slight," said Anna, " that I think he answered every purpose ; and it is just possible his partner *may* have had some more serious case."

" Of course," said Charlotte, coughing a little, " though my throat really is very sore. What I meant to say was, he was very pleasant and chatty."

" Oh, he will chat with anybody !" said Anna—" with Rhoda, up the avenue."

Just then Rhoda came in, fresh from the keen open air.

"Well, Rhoda, I hope you liked your companion!"

"Companion?" said Rhoda, amazed. "I have seen no one but Mr. George Mildmay between this and the lodge."

"And he did not turn about with you, I suppose?" said Anna, sarcastically.

"Certainly he did for about a dozen yards, and told me that Mrs. Althea——"

"Oh, I am tired of Mrs. Althea!" said Anna. "She had better get worse or get well."

"I'm sure, I hope, then, she will get well," said Rhoda. "Mr. Mildmay thinks she may rally very much next year, if she can get through this winter. He told me something that surprised me——"

"What was that?" said Charlotte.

"That Miss Bohun,—that beautiful Pamela I told you of,—is governess to the Miss Glyns."

"Indeed?" cried Anna. "Depend upon it, then, she hopes to be Mrs. Glyn some day!"

"Dear Anna, how can you be so severe on one whom you have never seen?"

"Human nature is the same all the world over. I don't say she'll succeed, but I'm sure she will try."

"Well, I think otherwise," said Rhoda, sighing, and wishing she had not named it. She went up to her own room, and with her bonnet hanging from her hand by the string,

musing in a desultory kind of way. She had come home sunny, and was now shady.

"Very likely Miss Bohun has not a room half so nice as this," thought she. "And she has to work for her livelihood, while I, as the little hymn says,—

'— have food while others starve,
And beg from door to door.'

—But, energy, sympathy! the power of being useful! the sweetness of having your efforts appreciated! . . . Ah, Pamela! I should like to change with you!—And yet even you are evil spoken of and unfairly judged. All that Mr. Mildmay said of you was kind and feeling, but how gratuitously injurious were Anna's suspicions of you! Marry Mr. Glyn, indeed! I dare say Pamela would as soon think of marrying the Man in the Moon. What a pity it is people cannot help judging one another! Well, but then Anna would say, ‘you are judging *me!*’ And thus the imperfections of those who are dear to us, and with whom we live, are apt to become our own.”

Rhoda's somewhat melancholy ruminations were abandoned for thoughts of a much livelier complexion, when, on rejoining her cousins, she found that a dinner-invitation to the whole family had arrived from Mrs. Glyn. That there might be room, as to her share in it, she had a separate invitation.

"And written in the most beautiful of hands," said Charlotte, highly elated. "Oh,—Miss Bohun, no doubt."

This party occasioned far more excitement among the Miss Hills than anywhere else. Mrs. Glyn's stiff sense of propriety caused her to return the compliment paid to herself and her son; but the reception-rooms at Bever Hollow were of moderate dimensions, and a dozen persons were as many as she chose to receive in them, except on extraordinary occasions. Four Hills, her son and herself, supplied half the number; the others were Mr. and Mrs. Heathcote, Miss Rickards and her brother, Mr. Forest, and a Colonel Enderby. These were not the *élite* of Mrs. Glyn's acquaintance; she did not mean them to be; but they were guests against whom the Hills could take no exceptions.

When Rhoda entered Mrs. Glyn's drawing-room, she looked round, rather foolishly hoping to see Pamela; but neither governess nor children were there. The assemblage was of the stiffest; and there sat Miss Roberta Rickards, bolt upright, in the stiffest of silks, talking in a mannish voice to Mr. Glyn about his stud; Anna was promoted to a seat next Mrs. Glyn; Mrs. Heathcote addressed some civil nothings to Charlotte; Mr. Hill joined Mr. Forest and the two other gentlemen; and Rhoda, as was frequently the case, found herself alone in a

pre-occupied circle. Presently, to her surprise and great pleasure, Mr. Glyn addressed her, and led the way to cheerful conversation. Dinner was announced too soon, she thought, for it broke up the dialogue, and she found herself consigned to the care of the colonel. A very common-place colonel he proved.

When the ladies returned to the drawing-room, Pamela and the children were sitting round the fire, and amusing themselves by fancying grotesque images in it. Rhoda instantly hastened towards her: the pleasure of the two girls in meeting each other was mutual; and while the other ladies gathered round the fire, with the exception of Miss Rickards, who, planted bolt upright in the centre of a large sofa which her ample robes completely covered, surveyed Pamela with a fixed, indomitable stare, they, with the children, retreated to a table covered with books of prints and engravings, in the most distant corner of the drawing-room. Adela was soon begging Rhoda to decide whether the graceful honeysuckle or dangerous thistle were to be preferred in Grandville's "*Fleurs Animées*;" while Pamela and Mab were equally interested in a volume of Bewick's vignettes.

"Look!" said Pamela, "here is a poor, old, broken-down soldier, with a wooden leg, hungrily sucking a bare bone, which, I suppose, is all the relief he has obtained at that grand

house among the trees. And his gaunt, half-starved dog eagerly yet patiently waits for the reversion of the bone ; while that peacock, perched on the park-wall, surveys them both with disdain."

" Poor old man ! poor dog ! " said little Mab. " I've seen this picture so often, Miss Bohun, and never understood it so well before. Tell us some more, please."

" Do you remember those pretty lines of Cowper's," said Pamela, looking at Rhoda,—

" 'That self-approving bird the peacock, see—
Mark what a sumptuous Pharisee is he'—

.and so forth ? "

" No—Oh, do go on."

" Oh, it goes on to describe a pompous professor under the metaphor, and then contrasts him with the humble-minded believer's type, the pheasant—

" Not so the pheasant on his charms presumes,
Though he, too, has a glory in his plumes ;
He, Christian-like, retires with modest mien
To the far grove, or dim sequestered green,
And shines, without desiring to be seen.'"

" Beautiful ! " said Rhoda.

" See, here is our old friend the soldier, again," said Pamela, after turning over a few leaves. " Here is a house in process of building, on the skirts of a heath. See, Mab ! see, Adela ! one of the bricklayers with a hod on his shoulder, and dressed in an old regimental coat, recognizes a long-lost brother, or at any

rate a brother-in-arms, in the old soldier, and shakes him joyfully by the hand!"

"Oh, a real brother, please!" cried Adela.
"What pretty stories you do tell!"

"Nay, the prints tell them, I think. Look at this poor, half-starved maid of all work, giving a tremendous thump with a gridiron to the voracious dog that is devouring her half-pound of beef-steak. Perhaps he wants it, though, as much as she does. Miss Hill will see more in the next than you will."—(Rhoda leant over her shoulder)—"A white-haired old man directs the attention of a lad to the inscription on a Runic monument in the midst of a wild moor. In the distance, a man is ploughing; still further off, you see, is the tall chimney of a manufactory. What a lapse of time we are carried through! From the days of Runic monuments to those of cotton-mills and sugar-boilers!"

"We are, indeed," said Rhoda, looking at her in a kind of surprise. "What is the next? I cannot make them out as you do. It seems to me nothing but the moon shining on a lone rock in a wild sea."

"'Nothing but'?"

"What, then?"

"Suppose a man should have been just washed off that rock! Or, that it should never have been seen by human eye since the creation of the world! And yet we know that nothing

was created for nothing. See here, again, a lonely and rugged shore, lashed by stormy waves, which have cast on it a broken rudder and compass. There, at least, is something suggestive of human danger and woe. And here is a companion sea-piece—A mariner on a lone rock, round which the waves are rising, lifting his hands, perhaps for the first time, in prayer."

"‘For the first time’? Your suggestions are very imaginative,” said Mr. Glyn, who, unobserved, was standing behind her.

Pamela started. “Bewick meant us to see all these things,” said she. “See; there is the mast of a shipwrecked vessel just appearing above the waves.”

“Oh, tell us about a funny one, please,” interposed Mabel. But Pamela seemed hampered, which, Mr. Glyn observing, he made his way to the sofa where Miss Rickards still seemed to find inexhaustible employment in staring at Pamela.

“Prodigious fine girl,” said she.

“She has better points than her looks,” said Mr. Glyn. “I rather fancy we have found a prize. Her indirect teaching of my children is capital.”

“I hate everything indirect,” cried Miss Roberta. “I like everything straightforward.”

“She is very straightforward too.” said Mr. Glyn. “Straightforward without being blunt.”

"The reverse of blunt is sharp," said Miss Rickards. "Now, I don't like sharp people."

"Nor do I," said Mr. Glyn. "I think Miss Bohun has never spoken a sharp word to either of the little girls since she came into the house; and yet her rule over them is perfect."

"Then I suppose you think her equal to Pope's model-wife," said Miss Roberta,—

"She who ne'er answers till a husband cools,
And if she rules him, never shows she rules."

"I don't know whether Miss Bohun would make a model-wife," said Mr. Glyn, "but she seems something very like a model-governess."

"O, one will lead to t'other," said Miss Roberta; "I hate your model people for my part, they're always so conceited. But 'tis pity so much beauty and instruction should be destined, in all probability, to be wasted on some country-clodhopper."

"It was, perhaps, to be beyond the reach of such a fate," said Mr. Glyn, "that she came here."

"Came here? Hump!"

"A girl, willing to secure her own independence by industry, is not very likely to marry for a settlement."

"That depends upon what sort of settlement it is."

"Precisely," said Mr. Glyn, smiling and

retreating. He thought the controversy had gone quite far enough.

There was a piercing frost this night, as every one found to their discomfort, during their long homeward progress. From this time, the winter set in with great severity, with every variety of frost black and white, east and north winds, hail, ice, and snow. People heaped roaring logs on blazing coals, and yet shivered over their fires; horses were rough-shod; door-steps sanded, pathways brushed free from snow; and few ventured needlessly out of cover except the busy or the hardy.

This was a very trying season to Mrs. Althea. She shrank before it like a sensitive plant. Mrs. Kitty nailed list round the doors, pasted up the windows, tried coal, coke, turf, peat, billets, one after another, and yet could not raise the thermometer.

"This is desperate dull work for you, Althea," said she at last. "Not a creature comes near us."

"Never mind: how should they?" said Mrs. Althea, "our lots are more equalized than you think. I have the warmest corner, and every one is glad, now, to get near the fire. It is when the hedges are green, the sun warm, and the windows wide open, that I would be like other people if I could."

That evening, Mrs. Kitty came in, much excited. "The stars are blazing like—fury," said she, "you must and shall take a peep at

your old friend Arcturus!" and suddenly lifting Mrs. Althea in her arms, the kind-hearted Kitty carried her, in spite of her exclamations and remonstrances, quite to the other end of the room, and set her up before the uncurtained window. Mrs. Althea, between laughing and crying, could not express what she felt at this; so, after brushing away a few tears and kissing Kitty heartily, she suffered herself to be propped up with sofa cushions so as to gaze at her ease, on the starry heavens.

"How they blink!" cried Mrs. Kitty, opening and shutting her hand very fast several times, to express the twinkling of the fixed stars.

"What *varieties* of splendour!" ejaculated Mrs. Althea. "How one would like to know whether the difference in their glories is real or only apparent—whether it betokens various distances, or only magnitudes."

"What good would it do us?" asked Mrs. Kitty.

"Nay, Kitty, do not bring me down so soon from my altitudes. We *see*, indeed, that they are irregularly distributed, that a great many more are perceptible towards the east than towards the north. You and I, without the aid of glasses, can see no stars smaller than those of the sixth degree of magnitude; but we know that the telescope brings to light thousands and millions that are smaller or else farther off. Observe, when Hannah brings in the candles

presently, how quickly the light travels into the room ; it darts into every corner in far less than a moment—yet the light which now reaches us from some of those stars, travelling at the same rapid rate, left their surfaces a hundred and forty years ago."

" You maze me," said Mrs. Kitty.

" Ah, we may well be amazed," said Mrs. Althea.

" I said *mazed*—puzzled. It bewilders me to think about it," said Mrs. Kitty.

" Well, mazed and amazed are both one," said Mrs. Althea, " though a-mazed is the more dignified and Saxon. 'When I consider the heavens, the work of thy hands, the moon and the stars which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou are mindful of him; the son of man that thou visitest him ?'"

" Aye, what, indeed," said Mrs. Kitty. " David felt he knew very little about it."

" And yet, there were grand astronomers in those old days," said Mr. Althea. " Chaldeans and Babylonians."

" Star-gazers—star-worshippers," said Mrs. Kitty.

" Something more than that, I incline to think," said Mrs. Althea, " though, it is to be feared, their star-gazing did lead at last to star-worshipping."

" That's just what I said," rejoined Mrs. Kitty. " Come, you're getting too excited about

it; I don't think I'm very fond of hearing about such things—they make us seem so small."

"Not smaller than we are," insisted Mrs. Althea.

"So insignificant," said Mrs. Kitty.

"No, Kitty, there you are wrong. A single soul is of more importance to the Almighty than all material existence."

After a little pause, she softly repeated,
"In my Father's house are many mansions.—
Perhaps those stars may be our future homes."

CHAPTER XVII.

Mrs. Brand.

But who is this? what thing of sea or land
Comes this way sailing, like a stately ship,
Sails set, and streamers waving?

MILTON, *Samson Agonistes.*

THIS little treat was not without its evil consequences to Mrs. Althea. Perhaps she would have been soon ill again at any rate; but however that might be, a very severe access of suffering came on, which she got through as she could; for her doctors being very busy and supposing her to be much as usual, absented themselves for several days. George Mildmay's heart smote him, when he came in glowing with health and exercise, and saw her wan, withered, and looking ready to die. Mrs. Kitty was very anxious, and yet provoked with herself and Mrs. Althea for being too much so; and when George pronounced "You'll get over it this time, ma'am"—she followed it up with "That's what *I* say;" and shortly afterwards told Hannah it was nothing in the world but

the cold, and they had all been frightened too easily.

Mrs. Althea, however, continued to droop, without having the monotony of her daily life cheered by a new face. She did not know what a treat was in store for her!

"What are you so hampered about, Kitty?" said she one morning to her sister, who was reading a letter.

"Here's a letter from Eliza Brand," said Mrs. Kitty; "she seems very uncomfortable."

"What! in hot water again?" said Mrs. Althea; "she is seldom out of it, I think."

"Don't be too severe, Althea; we have all our trials. Eliza Brand has hers as you have yours."

"She certainly may have," said Mrs. Althea.

"And *has*," said Mrs. Kitty. "Sheperton has become such a very unpleasant place to her that she is forced to leave it."

"She has made it too hot to hold her, in fact," said Mrs. Althea; "Not the first place!"

"Well, Althea, *I* pity her more than you do. There is no law I know of, to oblige her to remain at Sheperton."

"None whatever. 'The world is all before her, where to choose,'" said Mrs. Althea, "I only hope she won't come here."

"Well, she rather wishes to do so."

"Oh, Kitty!" and Mrs. Althea turned pale.

"What now?" said Mrs. Kitty.

"As she only *rather* wishes, I *very much* hope you will give her no encouragement."

"I!" cried Mrs. Kitty, "She wants no encouragement of mine. She is as free to settle in this neighbourhood, if she wishes it, as we were. She doesn't want anything at all of the sort; a little village is not enough for her; but she would be glad to get lodgings at Fordington or Collington; I suppose that would do us no harm."

"Of course not," said Mrs. Althea, reluctantly.

"And all she wants," continued Kitty, hesitating, "is to come here a little while till she has found lodgings."

"Oh!" cried Mrs. Althea, groaning, "Don't! Don't let it be, Kitty! so nicely as we are going on! She'll disorganize us all. She'll never find lodgings if she once comes here."

"Well," said Kitty, shedding a tear, "I must say you are very unkind, Althea."

"O Kitty! don't say that!"

" You are. Very unkind. Surely I might ask an old schoolfellow to the house for a few days."

"If you put it in that way, Kitty, you know I am silenced."

"Even if she were ever so unpleasant to you," continued Kitty, "if she were ever so disagreeable—whereas she is a person that everybody likes"—

"Kitty, Kitty!"—

"—and that never hurt you"—

"Ah—" sighed Mrs. Althea.

"Yes, I know what that sigh means—that the last time she was with us —"

"Kitty, don't talk of those times, please. You know they affect me too much. Do not take on in this way, nor raise your voice at me —let us speak gently."

"Oh, I'm not going to argue about it," said Mrs. Kitty, still very hotly; "only say yes or no, for you're the eldest —"

"I wish I might say No," said Mrs. Althea. "You know I cannot bear to disoblige you."

"Deeds, not words, for me," said Kitty.

"Just hear me. You have read the letter hastily; you are talking and feeling hastily now; but give yourself time to cool. The letter need not be answered this minute; nay, there is no opportunity of posting it. Let it alone till to-morrow; and then, when you have thought it over calmly, if you still desire to take a step which I consider very inexpedient, invite her here for a week."

"A week! it would be an affront to propose to her so short a time, with her limited finances."

"A fortnight, then; on the express understanding that it is to accommodate her in looking out for lodgings."

"If I write to her at all, I shall write civilly," cried Kitty. "I'm not going to insult my friend."

And turning very red, she was about to continue the strife, when Hannah, opening the door, said, demurely:—

"Please, mum, the donkey's ate all them beans!"

"All? then he'll burst!" exclaimed Mrs. Kitty, darting out of the room. Mrs. Althea began to laugh; but she was so weak that the laugh became a cry; and she lay, weeping salt tears, till the words occurred to her, "Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will answer thee." And she called upon Him.

Shortly after the dinner-party at Bever Hollow, Miss Roberta Rickards rode over, through mud and mire, to call on Mrs. Glyn, and ask her how she came to engage that prodigious fine girl as governess. Mrs. Glyn gave her very good reasons for it; but Miss Rickards remained of opinion that it was a very dangerous experiment, and hoped Mrs. Glyn might not come to think so, some fine day.

Although Mrs. Glyn knew Miss Roberta's ways of talking and thinking perfectly well, and was by no means accustomed to take her for an oracle, she was much annoyed by this attack, and ruminated over it after her visitor's departure. Since the evenings had become

long and a little dull, she had encouraged Pamela, who was rising more and more in her good opinion, to spend them in the drawing-room. Pamela, who relished solitude and society, but rather preferred the latter, when agreeable, accepted this encouragement with pleasure; and the three companions went on most harmoniously. Sometimes Mr. Glyn read aloud,—oftener to himself; sometimes he and his mother played backgammon or cribbage; sometimes Pamela threaded the old lady's needle or recovered a dropped stitch in her knitting; but, however it was, she was felt to be an agreeable addition to the little party by mother and son. Now, however, that Mrs. Glyn had been made uncomfortable by Miss Rickards, she began to consider whether this sociability might be prudent, or whether it might not be expedient for her to set Pamela back in her old position.

Probably it was while she was thinking of one thing and doing another, that the old lady, coming out of her dressing-room that evening, missed her footing on the highly waxed oaken stairs, and slipped down. Pamela, hearing a heavy fall and a cry, ran out of the school-room, raised her in her arms, and, with the aid of a servant, placed her in a chair. The accident appeared serious; Mrs. Glyn was not only frightened, but much hurt, and desired to be carried up to her bed-room. This was with

some little difficulty accomplished. Pamela assisted in undressing her, and placing her in bed; and prevailed on her to allow Mr. Forest to be sent for, though she would by no means permit Mr. Glyn to be summoned from Squire Heathcote's dinner-party.

Pamela placed herself beside the bed, to perform any little office of kindness that might be needed; and Mrs. Glyn seemed gratified by her presence; yet once or twice said, "You need not stay; Hutchins can do for me; you can go down."

"Why should I?" said Pamela; "the little girls are gone to bed. I hope, dear madam, you will allow me to remain."

"Be it so, then," said Mrs. Glyn; and, as she closed her eyes, Pamela thought she desired either sleep or silence, and sat perfectly still.

"A heavy fall is often a serious thing at my time of life," said Mrs. Glyn, presently. "My father had one, from which he never recovered."

"But, I dare say," replied Pamela, "that for one fall that proves serious, there are fifty that do not."

"Perhaps so, my dear; but mine may be that one.—If anything should happen," she added presently, in rather an indistinct manner, "you'll send for Mrs. Jay."

Pamela did not catch the name, nor did she precisely know what Mrs. Glyn supposed might happen; but, thinking she seemed falling asleep,

she sat quite quiet, while Hutchins went down to her supper.

Presently, Mrs. Glyn, rousing a little, muttered, "Yes, send for Mrs. Jay—send for Sophia Jay. Let her stay all the while, till—till—Oh, are you there, Sophia?"

Pamela remained silent and still. She began to think Mrs. Glyn was wandering a little. This impression was confirmed, when Mrs. Glyn, after some time, resumed—

"I suppose you have seen her, my dear. She is a very nice girl indeed—one of a very large family. I'm quite sorry to throw her out of a situation; but, you see, it would not do. Roberta said it would not; no, not exactly that, because then it had not happened—I'm a little confused. But she came over to warn me, I think, because of something she'd seen or heard—I don't know what it was—I never inquired. I did not take it quite kindly of her; but, my dear, she meant it well."

Though Pamela had no clue to these broken sentences, she had a glimmering of their sense here and there, that sufficed to make her uncomfortable. The time passed heavily. After a long silence, Mrs. Glyn again spoke, but more feverishly and impatiently.

"It will never do!" cried she. "She must go at once out of the house. There may be a good deal of art in all this. I have known young girls very designing. I was quite blind,

I assure you, till Roberta came over, one morning,—Charles calls her a man in petticoats ; but she is acute enough, for all that. I did not take it kindly of her at the time ; not at all ; though I did not show it. We had hashed venison that day—Charles dined out."

"We had hashed venison to-day," thought Pamela. "Miss Rickards called this afternoon, and Mr. Glyn is dining out. I must be the designing girl ! Oh me, what shall I do ? "

"Who's there ?" cried Mrs. Glyn, sharply and suddenly.

"Pamela, madam."

"My dear, give me your hand. How cool it feels, and mine is so hot ! Stoop down over me, and look me in the face."

Pamela did as she was desired, and Mrs. Glyn looked hard at her.

"You are a pretty girl, and a good girl, I do believe," said she.

"I hope I am the last, ma'am," said Pamela.

"Yes, yes ; there—you may go." Murmuring, as she turned her face to the pillow, "For all that, she would never do."

The colour mounted into Pamela's face. Just then, she heard a little bustle down stairs. "Mr. Forest is come, I believe, ma'am," said she.

"Raise me up a little, then," said Mrs. Glyn. "Higher ! higher ! I have slipped down from my pillow."

Pamela, kneeling on the bed, took the old lady under the arms, and with all her strength was endeavouring to raise her nearer the head of the bed, when George Mildmay entered. Mr. Forest had been from home when the messenger arrived. Mrs. Glyn was not well pleased at the exchange of the elder partner for the young one, and answered him very drily. He made out, however, that no bones were broken; but thought her head a little affected; prescribed a quieting draught, which happened to be within reach, and assured Pamela there was no need for her to sit up, as Mrs. Glyn was more accustomed to the services of her maid, whose nursing would be quite sufficient.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Latent Antipathies.

Familiar matter of to-day—
Some natural sorrow, joy, or pain
That has been, and may be again.

WORDSWORTH.

“I MUST go—yes, I must go to mamma,” thought poor Pamela, on her sleepless pillow, “and tell her all. No, that will never do; she will take me away at once, and I shall lose sixty pounds a year. And yet I feel as if I could not stay . . . and yet Mrs. Glyn was light-headed; and people are not answerable in that state for what they say. No, but they are for what they habitually think; and Mrs. Glyn must, I fear, have already entertained some such thoughts as those she expressed, or they would not have shaped themselves into words. I do not know how that is—I must ask Mrs. Althea. Yes, it will be better to consult Mrs. Althea than mamma, because she will have our difficulties at heart: mamma will, for

the time, have only mine. Mrs. Althea is dispassionate and yet sympathising—she will tell me whether to go or stay."

And the tired girl turned on her pillow, breathed a prayer, and fell asleep.

George Mildmay rode over to Mrs. Althea the next morning, brimful of things he wanted to say to her, and fervently hoping Mrs. Kitty might be in the poultry-yard, pig-stye, or anywhere but in the parlour.

Wherever Mrs. Kitty might be, Mrs. Althea, to his chagrin, was not alone. Her companion, at first sight, was not ill-looking; her age might be a little above forty; her figure was compact; her features tolerably regular, though sharp; her complexion a little heated; her eyes not large, but black, and as sharp as darning-needles. Her black silk dress and pink neck-tie were unexceptionable, her cap rather juvenile, but very neat; her foot and hand small, but rather stumpy. Such was Mrs. Brand. She was engaged in fabricating one of those works of art which go by the name of antimacassar.

"I'm glad to see you, George," cried she, starting up, and holding out her hand with a very friendly air.

"‘‘George!’’ who in the world can the woman be?’’ thought he. “‘You have the advantage of me, ma’am,’’ said he.

“Well, years have passed since we met,’’ said she, laughing; “‘I believe it was

'When you were a school-boy aged ten,
And mighty little Greek you knew.'"

"Thank 'e for the compliment, ma'am," says George; "I begin to have an impression of Mrs. Brand. May I make so bold as to ask what has cast you on this bleak, inhospitable shore?"

Mrs. Althea, who had looked very jaded when he entered, was clearing up more and more at every word he said, and was now trying to control a smile.

"I was invited, of course," said Mrs. Brand; "and very sorry have I been, I assure you, to be so long absent from this neighbourhood. I was always partial to it; and I suppose the liking was mutual; for your good people are paying me much attention."

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said George, "but you have not yet allowed me to take my patient by the hand; permit me."

"Certainly; but, dear me, Mr. Mildmay, your spur is entangled in my knitting-cotton—stay, stop! you'll ruin me!"

George pointed his toe like an opera-dancer, while Mrs. Brand disentangled her cotton; and he finished with a half pirouette, which brought him to Mrs. Althea's side.

"I'm not going to talk over my ailments this morning," said she quietly, as he felt her pulse.

"Just so," said George, in the same key.

"Come, come, you don't escape me in this way," said Mrs. Brand; "I want to hear all

and everything, from first to last, and told Kate so this morning when she wanted me to call on those good creatures, the Bohuns. ‘Here,’ said I to her, ‘I shall plant myself, till Mr. Mildmay comes, and till he is gone.’ So you’ve no escape,”—laughing and shaking her ringlets.

“Am I to understand our esteemed friend Mrs. Kitty by the term *Kate*?” said George. “If so, I take the liberty of remarking it is an abbreviation by which she has never been known in her own family; and as the name of Mrs. Kitty has become endeared among her intimates by long use, and the term *Kate* has somewhat disrespectful in it—”

“Disrespectful! Why, *Kate* and I were *Kate* and *Eliza* to one another before you were born, Mr. Mildmay, and shall continue so to our dying day, I assure you!”

“Well, I am sorry to hear it,” said George, “for *Kate* always puts me in mind of Petruchio’s ‘plain *Kate*, bonny *Kate*, and *Kate* the curst.’ You remember the passage, I dare say, Mrs. Althea?”

“Oh, Althea’s a regular encyclopedia,” said Mrs. Brand. “But, do you know, strange as my calling *Kate* ‘*Kate*,’ sounds to you, it strikes me equally odd to hear my two dear friends sunk into Mrs. Althea and Mrs. *Kitty*.”

“*Sunk?* There’s been no *sinking* in it, I can tell you!” cried George, fermenting.

“It sounds clownish; in *my* time, they were the two Miss Hills. I see no reason why,

simply because they have taken a lower position in society—”

“ They *haven’t!* ” flamed out George.

“ Well, well, you know what I mean. Althea understands me. True, they were the Miss Hills of Bever Hollow, and are so no longer; but need it therefore be forgotten? ”

“ Ma’am, it’s not forgotten! ” cried George. “ There are no two ladies in the whole county more respected, nor so much, as Mrs. Althea and Mrs. Kitty. I go about among all classes, from the highest to the lowest, and know a pretty deal more about it than you do or can, having been out of the neighbourhood, as you say, ever since I was ten years old—”

“ I spoke in round numbers ; it cannot be so long—nay, I’m persuaded it is not.”

“ Round, square, or any other numbers, I speak of what I know, ma’am, and I can swear to what I say.”

“ Well, well, Mr. Mildmay, you’ve a rough tongue to your opponents, and a smooth one for your patients,” said Mrs. Brand, with a constrained, unpleasant sort of smile. “ Though why I should term myself your opponent, I know not, for I am truly glad to hear your testimony to the good report of my dear friends throughout the circle of your practice. It was you who took up the cudgels, no one could say why or wherefore, to fight a man of straw. You remind me amazingly of what you were when

I saw you last; and of that illustrative line of one of our poets, ‘the child is father of the man.’”

“An odd relation, ma’am.”

“A very pretty boy you were at ten, George, I give you my word.”

“Oh, ma’am! I had my likeness taken at that age, so I have some faint idea of what I was—hair rather reddish; face rather full about the cheek and chin.”

“Well, your hair *was* a little red.”

“Never,” muttered Mrs. Althea.

“And when that’s the case in boyhood, the whiskers generally betray it afterwards.”

“Thank ‘e, ma’am.”

“Oh, yours are pretty dark, but you can’t deceive *me*—I see the golden tinge.”

“My dear lady,” cried George, “what a blessing it is that I can’t retaliate and say I see that your ringlets are sable silvered. On the contrary, you seem to me to have worn remarkably well during the last thirty years.”

“Thirteen, if you please!”

“And your appearance is so healthful, that I am certain it must proceed from abundance of exercise in the open air.”

“Quite true, certainly.”

“Then take a professional man’s advice,” said he, moderating his tone, “and don’t let a little cold weather keep you in-doors. You know, or perhaps you don’t know, that you have four

hundred and fifty voluntary muscles, which ought to be kept in free exercise, or morbidity will ensue. The air, though cold, is bracing; a long walk, daily, will be of the utmost benefit to you; because, if I were not afraid of alarming you. I should say—”

“What? Pray go on.”

“That you have a tendency to fulness in the head—”

“I certainly have.”

“Which, if you sit much in a heated room like this, will very possibly induce the morbid tendency I hinted at.”

“Are you serious?”

“Perfectly so. Of course, when it hails, snows, and sleets all together, I don’t mean you to turn out; but on a fine morning, say like this, with occasional gleams of sun, and the thermometer in the open air not much below thirty, I should say, walk early, and walk long.”

“Certainly, certainly. Dear me! four hundred and fifty voluntary muscles—”

“And, as I fancy we shall have a dull afternoon, and Mrs. Kitty has proposed a walk, I would, if I were you, certainly take one.”

“Thank you, thank you very kindly. I really will, as soon as you are gone, and we have lunched.”

George bit his lip, and rose to depart.

“Mrs. Brand,” said he to himself as he rode off, “I dislike you, distrust you, and feel dis-

respectful towards you. I find pleasure in being rude to you, ma'am. I know you do not like Mrs. Althea, and I am sure she has had reason, some time or other, to dislike you. Why should you come and intrude yourself here, where we were all going on so comfortably together? You'll put your finger into somebody's pie before you are satisfied, I'll answer for it, and I hope it may be burning hot. 'Mighty little Greek,' quotha! You have mighty little manners; and my whiskers are dark chestnut, ma'am, and not carroty; and my loved Mrs. Althea and Mrs. Kitty have not sunk in the estimation of society. They will be '*the ladies of Bever Hollow*' to their dying day. Mrs. Brand, be very careful of what you do or say, or I will be your open antagonist, and your successful antagonist too."

Meanwhile Mrs. Brand, with uplifted hands, was exclaiming, "My dearest Mrs. Althea, how that fine young man is gone off! Kate's letters represented him in such partial terms, that I really was prepared to find him a finished gentleman, instead of so absolutely bearish and clownish. What man of breeding ever calls a lady *ma'am*, in that pert, offensive kind of way? Besides, there is a degree of frivolity about him which convinces me that he must be quite too superficial for a case like yours."

"Manner, only manner," said Mrs. Althea. "We are used to it, and call it George's way."

"Way! but what a way. Not the way he should go."

"Well, that is a matter of opinion; but the manner, however boyish and buoyant, which I admit it to be, covers a sound understanding and a feeling heart."

"I must say I think a great deal of manner."

"When George Mildmay enters this room, he seems to fill it with sunshine."

"And that's a great thing," said Mrs. Brand, blandly. "It goes a great way with nervous, anxious patients."

Mrs. Althea was going to reply, but restrained.

"Where can Kitty be?" said she, rather wearily. "I am sure it must be lunch time."

"Shall I go and hasten it?" said Mrs. Brand, officiously. "Do let me just run and steal into the larder, and bring you in the nicest little sandwich in the world; or an egg—we'll boil one in a minute. A rasher? I'll fry you one in five minutes. Do let me be of some service."

"Oh no, thank you," said Mrs. Althea, "I was only thinking of you."

"My dear Althea, mine is the most accommodating appetite in the world. I can dine at six with the ~~great~~, and at—"

"Three with the small, I hope," said Kitty coming in. "Fie! could not you have said 'at six with the *late*?'"

"My dear, I should, and meant to have said so. But how sorry I am. Before I came, you dined at one."

"No, we did not."

"At two, then. That unfortunate admission of mine at tea-time, that I was very hungry! You have made this change on my account."

"Honestly, Eliza, I have made it for to-day, and no other, in order that we may have time to walk to the Bohuns'. If we start presently, we shall just avoid interrupting them at their dinner, or having our walk for our pains, which would grieve them."

"That is admirably thought of. I shall enjoy seeing worthy Mrs. Bohun. I suppose she has not a baby always in her arms now. Mr. Bohun, who was such a well-looking man thirteen years ago, is doubtless grown coarse."

"Hardly," said Kitty, doubtfully.

"Not at all," said Mrs. Althea. "Of course he shows the lapse of time; we all do."

"All," echoed Mrs. Brand, "but Kate less than any one I know of. By the bye, Kate, when you came in just now, you put me so in mind of Mrs. Mildmay!"

"Did I?" said Mrs. Kitty, looking flattered. "She was a pretty little woman before she grew so corpulent."

"Please don't use that word, Kitty," said Mrs. Althea.

"Only fit for Mrs. Mildmay's only son," said Mrs. Brand, laughing. "O fie, Kitty!"

"What shall I say then?" said Kitty. "Roundabout? Roly-poly? Come, Eliza, have another egg."

Mrs. Althea, whose aversions in some cases were rather strong, particularly disliked the *gusto* with which Mrs. Brand ate an egg; and was therefore secretly sorry when, after more pressing than an egg was worth, she accepted it. But it was stale! a horrible egg! Mrs. Kitty was quite dismayed, and could not think how it could be, for the date was on the shell; however, Mrs. Brand would not have another; and so, after a little more chattering and feet-warming over the fire, the two ladies started on their walk, and left Mrs. Althea to silence and repose.

CHAPTER XIX.

A Ruse.

A whisperer divideth friends.

BOOK OF JOB.

SHE was just becoming deeply interested in a book she was reading—Mrs. Schimmelpenninck's "Port Royalists"—and wishing and praying she might at length attain the heavenly composedness of the Mère Angèle,—when the door suddenly opened, and George Mildmay re-entered.

"George again?" said she, surprised.

"Have you seen one of my gloves?" said he.

"No," replied Mrs. Althea, looking round.

"Curiously enough, here it is in my pocket," said George. "Well, Mrs. Althea, you and I are now going to have a good coze. I came for that purpose this morning, and was riding homewards, gloomy as night at being defeated, when what should I see but our two fair friends trudging across Collington-common! Thought I, 'There is a tide in the affairs of

men!'—and this is mine, so I'll take it. The consequence is, I am here."

"And the glove—" said Mrs. Althea, mischievously.

"Ah, never mind that—there was no sin in a ruse so perfectly transparent."

"Well, but, George, what is the interesting matter—for I am sure it must be interesting—which brought you back? Tell me, my dear friend."

"Ah, that word goes to my heart. Friends we are, and friends we will be. However,—to begin abruptly,—Do you know Mrs. Glyn fell down stairs last night?"

"No! how should I? Poof woman! was she much hurt?"

"Very much, though fortunately she broke no bones. Mr. Forest was sent for in a hurry; he was out; I went in his stead—got there late; was shown up into a wonder of an old bedroom; fitted up in Henry the Eighth's time, I should think. There, on a tall bed all velvet, festoons, and fringings, lay the old lady, held up in the arms of Miss Bohun, who looked as beautiful as an angel. The subdued light of a lamp just caught her hair—"

"Mrs. Glyn's?"

"For shame, Mrs. Althea. Well, you know Miss Bohun is pretty, as well as I do; but somehow, last night there was something higher, more noble, about her mien, than I ever saw

before. Her pity was that of a superior being; not anxious and impulsive, as it would have been for her mother; but a kind of dignity accompanied her compassion. Her kind offices were performed in perfect quietness, without anything fussy or officious. Altogether, I was very much struck."

A short silence ensued.

"I have often wondered, George," said Mrs. Althea, "that you have never felt anything like this before."

"I have, but not so strongly. One thing has gone on adding to another, till . . . You cannot think how I felt when I first found her living at Bever Hollow! I had gone on, fancying I might speak at any time, and that she was too young, and I too poor, and, in short, that there was no harm or danger in waiting. All at once, the veil was torn away! I had missed my opportunity! To so straitened a family I might have seemed a fair match; to a disengaged heart, I might have been a successful suitor. But now—" He faltered.

"Where is the difference now?" said Mrs. Althea.

"All the difference, my kind friend. She is no longer accessible: perhaps no longer disengaged—"

"I do not believe she is in the way of seeing many to engage her," said Mrs. Althea, drily.

"Many? No, but there's *one*, which is worse. I look on Mr. Glyn as a most dangerous fellow."

"Love's blind, they say; and truly, George, you must be so, if you stumble where there is no obstacle in your path. Mr. Glyn!—I fancy Mr. Glyn would laugh a most insulting laugh at the idea of marrying a nursery governess; for really his little children hardly require more. He is, I am told, one of the proudest of men."

"Well, a proud man may think he ennobles whomsoever he raises to his own position. Besides! the blood of the De Bohuns! . . ."

"A chimera, ten to one, raised for your own torment. I do not suppose he thinks of her at all."

"But perhaps she may think of *him*!" I

"You have given her no one else to think about. My dear friend, if you have really well considered this matter, if you really know your heart, do not trifle with your own happiness, and perhaps another's, as so many people do, by delaying to learn how your fate really stands."

"You think I *may*, then?"

"I do."

"My dear, kind friend!"

"I am deeply interested in the welfare of you both. If you are successful, your happiness will make *me* happy too; if otherwise,—

why, the sooner you know it the better, and you will meet it like a man."

"Well, the sooner the fates give me an opportunity—What are you smiling at, Mrs. Althea?"

"I was thinking you were tolerably ingenuous in *making* an opportunity of speaking to *me*."

"What, about the glove? Ho! ho! But your governesses are hedged in, like Ecbatana of old, by triple circumvallations. Never mind: 'Where there's a will there's a way.' If I had Mrs. Glyn all to myself, I might keep her tied by the leg these many days; but, you see, Forest will look in and see how things are going, so that won't quite do."

"At the worst, the Christmas holidays will soon be here."

"Aye, the Christmas holidays! She will then go home, of course?"

"I conclude she will. She thought so, I know, before this accident."

"Ha! I must get Mrs. Glyn well as fast as I can, then, I see."

"Pray, George, does my illness depend on your volition as Mrs. Glyn's appears to do?"

"Would that it did!—even if I were not jesting about her. How is it with you to-day? You looked sadly worn when I first saw you this morning."

"Oh, that was only Mrs. Brand."

"Mrs. Brand!—I want to have a good talk

with you about her. I was more than ten, as she knows well enough, when she was last here; and my impression is, that she went away leaving anything but an odour of sanctity behind her. What had she been about?"

"George, you have asked one of the most difficult questions in the world. There are some persons of whom you never can complain without seeming captious or fastidious; because the harm they do is brought about by such small and disconnected touches, that it is only their multiplicity which produces the aggregate of evil."

"Just so. We call a person of that sort a disagreeable person, or a mischievous person, just according to the amount and nature of the aggregate. But there must be something to tell about her. Begin at the beginning."

"The beginning was, she and Kitty were schoolfellows, and became cronies. They occasionally spent the holidays with one another, but not often; for my mother, who had a very quick insight into character, did not like Eliza's, even as a little girl."

"Don't call her Eliza. Mrs. Brand is quite good enough for her."

"She was not Mrs. Brand then, she was Eliza Provost; a prettyish girl, daughter of a country attorney in a town twenty miles off. After they left school, she frequently invited

Kitty to pay her a long visit: my mother always declined. Kitty at length became hurt, and said her friend was being made to think her proud and unsociable. As a compromise—no, compensation,—my mother allowed Kitty to invite her to Bever Hollow for a month; but she stayed twice that time. In those days, Mr. Bohun and your father, George, were a good deal at our house."

"Looking after *you*, Mrs. Althea!"

"Oh no! It soon became manifest that he was looking after *Kitty*."

"Not at first, though."

"At first?" repeated Mrs. Althea, rather hesitating. "Well, at first, Eliza Provost certainly tried to captivate him."

"That wasn't the first-first, though, ma'am," insisted George. "She tried to get him away from *you*."

"You speak as if you knew all about it already," said Mrs. Althea, faintly smiling.

"I know this much," said George, bending towards her, and speaking very earnestly, "that the other day, in turning out one of the little drawers of my father's old bureau, I found, wedged in at the back, a little yellowish bit of folded paper, docketed in his own hand, 'Althea's hair,' though, on opening it, I found it empty."

"Did you?" said Mrs. Althea, with a tear in her eye. "I—I think I should like to see that

paper, if you happen to have preserved it, just to be sure it is no fancy of yours, though I assure you, *I* never gave him any hair."

"Oh, he took it, I dare say," said George, roguishly, "or got somebody else to get it for him,—your sister, perhaps?"

"No," said Mrs. Althea, reflectively, "it must have been Eliza Provost. I remember she quite worried us one day for bits of hair; just about the time she was beginning to try to please Mr. Mildmay."

"Which she never did, I'm clear!" cried George

"At any rate, she—Oh, why should we rake up these old things?"

"Why? Why, because they are interesting to us both, my dear friend. Truth lies in a well, and we shall get down to it at last. You see we have already turned up an interesting fact about that lock of hair."

"Though why she should have given him a lock of my hair is very unaccountable," said Mrs. Althea.

"Perhaps that first put her upon finding out he was a marrying man," suggested George. "So then, having made out that, and discerned that he was beginning to feel a tenderness towards you, she tried to divert it to herself."

"At any rate, it ended in its being diverted to Kitty."

"No, ma'am, it *ended*, if you please; in being diverted to my mother."

They both laughed.

"It must be confessed," said George, "the dear, good man was a little *voltage*. Well, what ensued after her paying her addresses to my father?"

"George, for shame! My mother saw enough of what was going on to dislike it exceedingly. At the end of the second month, she took care that Eliza should go home. Kitty and your father did not get on much; he absented himself from us, and, in the course of a few months, married your mother."

"Whom I lost too early," said George, sighing. "Well, did anything come of Mr. Bohun?"

"Oh, no. Nothing, nothing. He was only a friend of the family; a most invaluable, delightful, disinterested friend. Well, we went on very comfortably after that, till Peregrine came home; we then saw much company, chiefly on his account. We had so many visitors, coming and going, that my mother thought Eliza only one among many, who could do no harm; and not only allowed Kitty to stay with her, but to bring her back. Eliza was now older and abler; she got on much better. She set herself to please us all; she especially aimed to please Peregrine, and; very, very nearly succeeded. As this was most opposite to the wishes of my

father and mother, they mutually interfered and put an end to it. But Peregrine left home in wrath ; and Eliza was exceedingly angry too, as much so as was compatible with seeming broken-hearted. She left us all at cross-purposes ; my father, chafed with my mother for having, *he* said, been plainer with Peregrine than there was need of ; my mother vexed with Kitty for having brought Eliza into the family ; and Kitty hurt at my sympathising with my mother. However, it all blew over when we heard that Peregrine had engaged himself in another and an unexceptionable quarter ; and very soon afterwards, Kitty received cards and cake from the triumphant Mrs. Brand."

" What a blessing ! "

" Mr. Brand did not prove much of a blessing, I believe ; for he was an elderly man, of very crabbed temper ; but Kitty, who did not go near her friend till some time after my mother's death, said she managed him admirably."

" Managed him ! I imagine she did ! He did not long trouble her. After his death, which occurred in a few years, she found herself with just enough to maintain an appearance of moderate gentility. Then, at Kitty's instance, she paid us another visit, or rather visitation. Oh, what an infliction it was ! Kitty had visited much in a new circle during her absence from us, and she and Mrs. Brand had a host of subjects interesting and en-

tertaining to themselves, which formed the subjects of allusions and inuendoes in which I could take no part. At length there seemed quite a barrier of division raised up between Kitty and me. Oh, George, how sad it was! I could cry over it when I think of it. I have cried over it dozens of times!"

George groaned.

" My poor father was then confined to his easy-chair by rheumatic gout. I kept with him as much as I could; read to him, wrote for him, talked to him. All at once, Mrs. Brand became very attentive to him. If I left the room for a few minutes, I found her in my chair beside him when I returned. Do you remember her saying this morning, she had *planted* herself here to see you? Well, she used to plant herself beside my father—"

" She sha'n't take root, though, here!" cried George, firing up.

" O George! I hope not! Hark! the clock strikes three,—she will soon return. We had better not speak of her any more."

" I must be off, or she'll catch me!"

" Never *let* yourself be caught! Never let her catch you!—George! see!—She caught, or tried to catch your father, Mr. Bohun, her own husband, my brother, my father, my sister; and if her evil influence should at length extend to *you*—where am I? what will become of me? whom have I left?"

Mrs. Althea cried bitterly. He caught her hand, and held it.

"If you ever find her establishing herself here—if you ever find her getting between me and Kitty : if you find her going about from house to house, sowing gossip and calumnies—"

"Never fear ! I'll be even with her!"

"If she begins to steal on you with hints that her dear Althea is very imaginative, very fanciful, very over-wrought, hardly fit to be trusted to her own judgment—her words, her letters to be taken with a grain of salt—"

She was weeping helplessly.

"Mrs. Althea ! look at me !"

She looked up at him through her tears.

"Forewarned, forearmed. I knew her by intuition. You have possessed me of facts. Now cast away all fear. I shall watch over you. I shall keep my eye upon her. She shall not do you one grain of harm. Domestically, she may and will be a plague, as long as her visit lasts (by the way, how could you invite her? —oh, to please Kitty, to be sure); but out of doors she shall do you no mischief; nor indoors either, if I can help it."

He stooped his head, and kissed her hand.

"I am your knight," said he affectionately, "as truly as St. George was Una's ; and this is my kiss of allegiance. And now good bye, or they'll certainly be in upon us. Professionally,

I ought not to have let you talk so much ; but you have eased your mind and set mine to work ; so now keep as quiet as you can till they return ; and afterwards too. Think of something quite different ! Think of Pamela and me."

" I will," said she, smiling, and drying her eyes. " I cannot have anything pleasanter to think about."

He pressed her hand once more, and was off. She thought of him and Pamela for several minutes ; and then mentally repeated some lines that she had long experienced to be unutterably tranquillizing.

Commit thou all thy ways
To His unerring hands,
To His sure truth and tender care,
Who earth and heaven commands.

No profit canst thou gain
By self-consuming care :
To Him commend thy cause ; His ear
Attends the softest prayer.

Give to the winds thy fears !
Hope ! and be undismayed !
He hears thy sighs, He counts thy tears,
He will lift up thy head.

Through waves and clouds and storms,
He'll safely guide thy way ;—
Trust but to Him : so shall thy night
Soon end in cloudless day.

CHAPTER XX.

A Family Man.

Ofttimes it hapeth that sorrows of the mind
Find remedy unsought, which seeking could not find.

SPENSER.

PAMELA and her young charges had walked rather too late in the damp, leafless shrubbery; and the consequence was, that on the morning after the accident, she found she had caught a severe cold ; and the nurse came to her while she was dressing, to say that the children were so poorly, that she had kept them in bed.

Thus, a walk to the Hill House was quite out of the question, even had there been no other obstacles : and things appear so different in the still hours of darkness, and in the bright morning light, that Pamela's alarms had almost faded away : and she found quite enough to think about in the indisposition of her pupils and herself, and in considering whether she had any imprudence to be answerable for. She feared she had been rather thoughtless.

On her way to the children, she passed Mrs.

Glyn's door, just as the maid was opening it ; and paused to inquire how she had passed the night.

" My dear, come in," said Mrs. Glyn, hearing her voice. " Why, how wan and heavy-eyed you look ! You have not been sitting up, I hope ? "

" Oh no, dear madam, I have only taken a little cold. How are you this morning ? "

" In a good deal of pain. I hope Mr. Forest himself will come this morning, instead of sending that young man. How are the children ? "

" I am sorry to say, ma'am, they seem to have taken cold. Nurse has kept them in bed, and I was just going to see them."

" Pray do so, my dear, and come back and let me know how they are. Nurse did quite right."

On Pamela's return to Mrs. Glyn's room, the door was ajar, and she found Mr. Glyn standing by his mother's bedside. He was saying, " My dear mother, there can be no reason in the world for sending for Mrs. Jay."

Pamela did not wish to hear any more, and thought she might as well go down and make the breakfast. This was a meal the whole family were accustomed to take together ; and she had just made the tea as usual, when Mr. Glyn came in, and, taking his accustomed seat, began to open his letters.

"This is an awkward accident of my mother's, Miss Bohun," said he; "but I fancy no great mischief is likely to accrue from it."

"I hope not," said Pamela.

"I shall hear what Forest says about it, however," said Mr. Glyn. "The little girls, too, I understand, are poorly. Colds, I suppose?"

"Yes, sir; and Mrs. Glyn desired to hear my report of them as soon as I had seen them; therefore I had, perhaps, better go to her now; the tea is not quite ready."

"Pray do not hurry back on my account," said Mr. Glyn; "I have plenty to do, you see. My mother fancies I shall be unable to get on without her, and has been talking of having a Mrs. Jay, which would be a great bore; so pray don't encourage it, or let her think I cannot get on perfectly well by myself. In fact, I promised last night to spend the week with Colonel Enderby; and if Forest gives a good report, there's no reason why I should not go. You will send for me, you know, if I'm wanted."

"What *nonchalance!*!" thought Pamela rather indignantly, as she went up to Mrs. Glyn. "I could not speak or feel so of my mother. The cases are different, of course: but the accident may prove more serious than he seems willing to think; and, at any rate, while in suspense, he might show a little more feeling. Perhaps he has not much, in spite of his pleasant manners."

"My dear," said Mrs. Glyn, when she had heard Pamela's report, "I think the children are much better where they are; and you will be with them too, and have your meals in the day-nursery, which is a nice snug room. It will be much the best for you to keep in the same temperature, on this floor, as much as you can. It occurred to me in the night, that it would be a nice plan to have Mrs. Jay here till I get about again, which would prevent Charles's feeling lonely. But Charles won't hear of it, and says he would run away from her; so we will get on as well as we can."

Pamela was glad to find Mrs. Glyn had settled her mind so readily and reasonably. She returned to the breakfast-room, and found Mrs. Hutchins and nurse waiting in the vestibule with their trays, to carry up the breakfasts of their respective charges.

"Well," said Mr. Glyn, as he helped himself to cold game, "I hope we are not going to have Mrs. Jay?"

"I think not," said Pamela.

"Mrs. Jay is a thoroughly good creature, but an inveterate proser. Not that I've any objection to *her* coming if *I* go," said Mr. Glyn, laughing. "My mother and you are welcome to have her to yourselves; but, if she comes, I'm off. And I would rather have the privilege of staying, if my mother's case proves in the least anxious. There cannot

be a man who less minds knocking about by himself now and then, than I do."

Pamela was very glad to hear it.

"You don't look very well," said he presently, observing her for the first time. "Cold?"

"I believe so—it is not very troublesome."

"I should not be surprised if it went through the house. You had better see Forest. He will dose you all round. I hope I shan't be in for it, hey?—Shouldn't wonder if we were in Forest's books, now, all the winter. We were so once before."

Even Miss Roberta could hardly have seen in this any approach to love-making: but it was all that passed beyond the ordinary courtesies of the table.

When Mr. Forest came, he pronounced Pamela and the children to have incipient influenza, and ordered strict quarantine. Of Mrs. Glyn he hesitated to speak with such certainty of a favourable conclusion, as to make Mr. Glyn quite easy in leaving her. He therefore gave up his engagement to the Colonel, and prepared to make himself as comfortable as a study replete with luxury and a pile of new publications could make him.

Mr. Forest had not seen Pamela in her new character till now, and looked at her a little askance. "So! this is what you have got by having other people's children to look after,"

muttered he, as he felt her pulse. " You like it, I suppose ? "

" Oh yes," said Pamela stoutly, " in every respect except that of being separated from papa and mamma. Have you seen them lately ? " and she looked wistfully at him.

" Oh yes. Your mother has a cold : but don't frighten yourself. When I say a cold, I don't mean influenza. You are far more likely to have a severe attack than she is : I just looked in to pay a friendly visit, and ask how you were."

" That was very kind of you."

" Not at all," clearing his throat. " You know I must always take interest in you : especially now that you are turned out of the family nest. I suppose," in a lower voice, " you like your surroundings ? "

" Not here, in the day-nursery," said Pamela, smiling and looking at the bare walls, " so well as in our pleasant sitting-room downstairs."

" Here I shall keep you, though, for a few days," said he, laughing, and shaking her cordially by the hand. " Yes, yes," he thought to himself as he left the room, " better up here, with the rest of 'em, in these warm carpeted galleries and air-tight vestibules, than down among the draughts, with that handsome, idle fellow lounging over the fire." Pamela had plenty of guardians.

Later in the day, Mr. Hill and Rhoda called at Bever Hollow. They were leaving cards, when Mr. Glyn, who had seen them arrive, and was feeling rather yawnish, took advantage of a little rain that was falling, to go out to them and press them to come in.

The rain soon ceased; but Rhoda, hearing that Pamela was indisposed, asked permission to go up to the day-nursery; where, rather to Mr. Glyn's chagrin, she remained till her uncle sent for her. A bright thought occurred to Mr. Glyn, that he might ride with them; and while his horse was being brought out, Pamela, who had accompanied Rhoda down-stairs, remained chatting with her at one of the windows.

"Have you seen Mrs. Althea lately?" said she.

"No," said Rhoda, "we never ride there; and I should take shame to myself if the roads and commons had not been in such a state as to be unfit for walking. Mr. Forest, however, said that she has been very ill, but is now better."

"When I look round on these books and portfolios of rare engravings," said Pamela, "I sometimes wish they were mine, that I might lend them to her."

"Pray send her what you like, Miss Bohun," cried Mr. Glyn, who overheard her at the other end of the drawing-room.

"Oh, thank you," said Pamela, colouring, and looking pleased.

"That is—all except the Caracci portfolio," said Mr. Glyn, drawing nearer to her, "and the Vandykes—I presume the old lady would not care much for them, and I should not much care to risk them."

Pamela smiled a little, and was silent.

"Old lady!" cried Rhoda. "We do not consider her in that light at all; and Mrs. Althea has the purest taste for works of art; indeed, I have heard Mr. Mildmay say that some of her etchings were as good as Paul Sandby's."

"Indeed? then she may like to see my Paul Sandby collection," said Mr. Glyn. "As I am not very intimate with Mrs. Althea myself, perhaps you will allow me to entrust the negotiation to you; and if you find they will really give her pleasure, she shall have them."

Rhoda gladly undertook the little commission; and as the horses were now brought round, the riders set forth. Pamela waited to see them mount and ride off; and she thought Rhoda looked fluttered and pleased, as Mr. Glyn arranged her reins and put them into her hand. The drawing-room was delightfully warm: oak logs blazed on the fire; the snow-white rug embedded the feet in its fleecy softness; tempting new books, magazines, and reviews were strewn on the table. Pamela looked around, and thought how she should like an hour's practice on that beautiful grand-

piano : stood a few minutes before her favourite Cuyp ; and then ran off to the day-nursery.

When market-day came round, a farm-servant brought Mrs. Kitty's horse to the door.

" Dear me, there's a saddle-horse ! " exclaimed Mrs. Brand, as she came down to breakfast. " A side-saddle, too ! "

" Did not Kitty tell you over-night she was going to market this morning ? " said Mrs. Althea. " I think you observed that you should have letters to write."

" Dear me ! yes," said Mrs. Brand ; " but I could not conceive—I did not understand—I never realized till now—in *what way*—"

The last two words were almost inaudible—a minute or two afterwards, Mrs. Althea, looking up, saw, to her surprise, Mrs. Brand's face covered with her handkerchief.

" Is anything the matter ? " said she.

" Oh, never mind—I shall be better presently—don't take any notice," said Mrs. Brand, rubbing her eyes very hard with her handkerchief. Mrs. Althea complied with her request.

The next moment enter Mrs. Kitty, in riding habiliments, and jovial spirits. Not seeing Mrs. Brand, who was a little behind the curtain, she went straight up to her sister, whom she kissed, and then, spreading out her riding-skirt—

" Only see, Althea ! " said she " what a nasty jag the habit-pin has made 'n the cloth ! "

"I'll draw it together in a minute for you," says Mrs. Althea.

"Oh no, my dear! I haven't time. We are late already; and as soon as prayers and breakfast are over, I must be off. Only, I don't think I shall use a habit-pin any more; because, where's the good? I've nobody to take it out for me; and if my habit *does* catch the wind a little, what does it signify? I'm no girl, nor yet fine lady; and when I *was* a girl, folks used to say I had a well-turned ankle, hey?" and she laughed merrily.

"And spoke the truth in saying so," said Mrs. Althea, cordially.

"Truly they did," said Mrs. Brand, emerging from her retirement.

"Dear me, are you down, Eliza?" said Mrs. Kitty, ringing the bell loudly; "we have no time to lose. You've a sty coming in your eye."

"Oh, no," said Mrs. Brand, faintly.

"Tis so, I assure you." Mrs. Brand coughed, and would have dallied with the subject a little, but Hannah answered the bell, and Mrs. Kitty immediately opened the large Bible. Breakfast immediately followed prayers; and Mrs. Kitty, not keeping her seat two minutes together, was continually popping in and out, giving orders with her mouth full, conning memoranda on her slate, and telling Mrs. Althea, more than once, that if John Twiddy should come, he must call again when she was at home, for

there had been an error of two and eightpence in their last settlement.

"What spirits you have, Kate!" said Mrs. Brand, admiringly.

"Oh, what should hinder me of them, on a fine morning like this?" said Mrs. Kitty. "Market-day always puts me in spirits. I expect to do a good stroke of business this morning in the bean-market. I only wish you could go with me."

"*I?*—my dear Kate!"

"Well, I know it can't be, because we haven't another saddle-horse; and perhaps, even if I had got Farmer Stone to lend us his light chaise, you might not have liked to go in it."

"No, I certainly should not," said Mrs. Brand with constraint, "nor have liked *you* to drive it. The horse is preferable to that."

"For one, but not for two. That's the only thing."

"My dear Kate, what should I do in the bean-market?"

"Oh, of course, no good. Only look about you a little."

"I'd much rather *not* look about me, if I were there," said Mrs. Brand, smiling expressively.

"What! for fear of seeing any one you knew? Dear me, Eliza, if you have any sensitivity of that sort, mine has 'een worn out long ago, I can tell you!"

"Your spirit is subdued to what it works in," said Mrs. Brand, plaintively.

"Quite," said Mrs. Kitty, with a joyous laugh. "So, ma'am, if you like to see me mount, now's your time. Bring out the chair, Hannah!"

"You dear oddity!" cried Mrs. Brand, trying to give her a caress as she hastened by her. "A chair, indeed! I remember when *that* was not the way you used to mount, Kate!"

"Oh, of course," said Mrs. Kitty, tucking her whip under her arm while she pulled on her strong gloves. "Young girls can spring into their saddles as light as a feather, and young men are very happy to help them; but *I'm* neither young, now, nor as light as a feather, and am very thankful to be as active as I am at my time of life—"

"One would think you were quite advanced in years, Kate!" said Mrs. Brand, following her out.

"Not to see me do this," said Mrs. Kitty, nimbly ascending to her saddle. Hannah settled her habit; and then, merrily waving her hand, she "laughed and rode away."

Mrs. Brand returned to the parlour and sighed profoundly. Both the ladies knitted for some time in silence. At length Mrs. Brand exclaimed—

"'Tis no use musing on the past. Regrets are dangerous."

"Yes, I think they are sometimes, though one can't always help them," said Mrs. Althea. "However, musing on the past need not be regretful. I often indulge in it."

"Is it possible?" said Mrs. Brand.

"Why not?"

"Oh, you have such a dreary life to look back upon!"

"We have had some great afflictions, certainly; but likewise many blessings: and even afflictions—"

"Prove blessings in disguise," said Mrs. Brand. "Ah yes, just so—but still, when one's position has very much altered, and one's fortune has very much decreased, and one's expectations have been much disappointed, and one's family and early friends have dropped off,—a single woman has much to deject her."

"I admit it," said Mrs. Althea, touched with sudden pity, as she supposed Mrs. Brand referring to her own case; "your position is isolated at present, I grant, but still—"

"Mine?" cried Mrs. Brand, with wide-opened eyes, and looking half-affronted. "I said *single* women. I was thinking of Kitty and you."

"Oh, we are double," said Mrs. Althea, "and that divides our troubles and doubles our pleasures."

"Well, I can't understand it," said Mrs. Brand. "I always had too sensitive a nature,

I believe. In your position I should be wretched."

"But why?"

"Oh, every energy would seem 'cribbed, cabined, and confined!' I should so hate to be useless; I should fancy myself such an incumbrance to others! I should long so to help them in whatever they were about; to relieve them of this or that care, to be of some importance in my own little world, to—"

"All this—" began Mrs. Althea.

"To take active exercise," continued Mrs. Brand; "to get to church, to go about among the poor, and among my friends—"

"All this, or much of it, I have felt at times," said Mrs. Althea; "but I have sought and found submission, and the privations are more easily borne than you would think when they are once recognised as coming from our heavenly Father."

"Dear me, yes," said Mrs. Brand; "I have heard many invalids say so. It is quite a common thing, I believe, though I have never been put to any such painful experience. *My* health has always been very good; my spirits have always been very equal: indeed, I've been frequently told that the reason I have enjoyed such fine health is, that my spirits are so equal. Nothing impairs health more than uneven spirits—except uneven temper: so much so, that I declare I am getting more and more into the

way, when I hear people complaining of the one, of setting it down to the other."

Mrs. Althea knitted in silence.

"Kate, now, has a golden temper," suddenly cried Mrs. Brand.

"She has," said Mrs. Althea.

"And see what health she has!" exclaimed Mrs. Brand.

"Long may she have it," said Mrs. Althea, faltering.

"Truly, for your own sake."

"Oh, for hers."

"For your own sake, if for no other, I was going to say; for where would you be without her?"

"Ah, I want no reminder of that!"

Another pause.

"Yes; it *is* sad," resumed Mrs. Brand, "when two unmarried women, advancing in years, live together, to think that one *must* survive the other!"

Another pause.

"The surviving one," said Mrs. Brand, reflectively, "could not indulge much in musing on the past, I should think, without regrets?"

Silence.

"Well, I shall go and write my letters."

Mrs. Althea's heart felt as heavy as lead. She stretched out her hand to a thick little book within her reach, George Wither's poems, and sighing, opened on this:

O ! were it not that God hath given me
Some trials of those comfortings which He
For men in their extremities provides,
And from the knowledges of others hides,
What liberty He gives when we do fall
Within the compass of an outward thrall,
And what contentments He bestows on them
Whom others do neglect, or else contemn—
Yea ! had I not believed Him who says
That God doth knowledge take of all our ways,
That He observes each rock within our path,
With every secret sorrow that it hath,
That He then nearest is when we bemoan
His absence, and suppose Him farthest gone—
Had this been hidden from me, I had here,
For every line I writ, dropped down a tear.
But I so oft have found, to my content,
And felt so oft what comforts God hath sent,
When of all outward helps we are deprived,
That (would the same by all men were believed !)
It might be thought true pleasures were possessed
Of none but men forsaken and distressed !

“ True poet ! sincere believer ! And he who
penned this consolation,” thought Mrs. Althea,
“ lay in the close, sordid precincts of the
Marshalsea prison ; and therein God gave him
spirit to sing sweetly as a lark.”

CHAPTER XXI.

Head and Hands.

Yet did she not lament with loud allew,
As women wont, but with deep sighs and singulif few.

SPENSER.

"DEAR me, what a crick I have in my back!" cried Mrs. Kitty at tea-time.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Brand, with a very meaning shake of the head—if any one had but known what the meaning was.

"I hope your rheumatism is not coming back, Kitty," said Mrs. Althea. "The fogs were rising when you came in."

"Oh no," said Kitty, "and the crick is quite gone now."

"I have a theory of my own about that crick," said Mrs. Brand.

"What is it?" said Kitty, who was pouring out tea.

"Another time," said Mrs. Brand *sotto voce*.

"Pray let me hear your theory," said Mrs. Althea. "Kitty's health is as valuable to me, I suppose, as to any one living."

"I believe the crick is a sprain," said Mrs. Brand.

"Oh no," said Kitty.

"Well, I hope it mayn't prove so," said Mrs. Brand.

"How should I sprain myself?" cried Kitty.

"Nay, Kitty," interposed Mrs. Althea, "you are so alert that there are plenty of ways in which you *may* have sprained yourself."

"And one is enough," said Mrs. Brand.

"But I have not done anything beyond common," persisted Kitty.

"What!" cried Mrs. Brand, lifting her hands. "Were you not telling me you had carried Althea to the other end of the room?"

"Oh," said Kitty, colouring, "that was a bit of a brag."

"I wish she had not done it, though," said Mrs. Althea, wistfully. "But you never told me, dearest Kitty, that you had sprained yourself by it."

"Nor did I," said Kitty, stoutly. "This little crick, just now, was only just a little passing prick between my shoulders. I wish I had not been so stupid as to name it. I dare say it *was* a little twinge of my old enemy."

This would quite have satisfied Mrs. Althea if she had not perceived, or thought she perceived, an interchange of looks between her companions. From that moment, she became uneasy.

"What delicious bread this is, Kate!—I beg pardon,—Kitty!" said Mrs. Brand.

"Oh, pray call me Kate, if you like," said Mrs. Kitty.

"Althea does not like it," said Mrs. Brand.

Mrs. Althea held her peace.

"Now, do you, Althea?" cried Mrs. Brand.
"Be candid."

"Candidly, then, I do not," said Mrs. Althea.
"I always think there is a little bad taste in calling any one by a name, or an abbreviation, that is not recognised in their own families."

"I'm answered," said Mrs. Brand, smiling, and nodding triumphantly at Kitty.

"Well," cried Kitty, "sooner than accuse you of bad taste, Eliza, I would hear you call me Kate all the days of your life. So do if you like it."

"Thank you! Then I certainly will," said Mrs. Brand. "It calls up such pleasing memories! Pleasing and painful too!" And she heaved a sigh.

"My father and mother always called me Kitty," said Mrs. Kitty, "and therefore I like the name. But Peregrine often called me Kate; so I like that too."

"How thoroughly domestic you are, Kate, even in your memories! You dwell on the recollections of your family with fond tenderness, while those who admired and sought you

are utterly forgotten, or thought of with perfect indifference."

"Why not?" said Kitty. "I should have liked to get married well enough at one time,—to have a house of my own and so forth,—but there never was a man likely to ask me, for whom I cared a halfpenny."

"Kate!"

"Not a straw!"

"Kate!"

"Not a pin!"

"Ah well,—it may have been so.—Certainly, this is the very best butter I ever tasted," said Mrs. Brand.

"Ah, you know my weak side," said Kitty.

"Why, what can *you* have to do with it?" said Mrs. Brand. "Oh!—Aye, I remember. Well, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Ponsonby had an apparatus in their fancy dairy for making a pat of butter for their breakfast without soiling their hands."

"Ours is not a fancy dairy, though," said Mrs. Kitty; "we make plenty of butter, and cheese too, for the market as well as ourselves; and our butter fetches a penny a pound more than other people's from the badger."

"Badger! who's he?"

"The dealer that buys up the stock direct from the dairy, without ever letting it get into the market. He has given me a penny a pound more, ever since I buried it."

"Buried what?"

"Why, the butter. We pour the cream into a clean cloth, tie it up like a pudding, put another cloth round it to keep off the dirt; dig a hole, bury it, and in the course of a few hours dig it up again. When poured into a bowl, and stirred smoothly round for a few minutes with a rolling-pin, the buttermilk separates from it, and there's your butter!"

Mrs. Brand laughed heartily at this, and said she had never heard of such a thing in her life. "Where could you pick it up, Kate? Is it the custom of the country?"

"Oh dear, no; Althea found it in one of her books."

"'Practical Economy,'" said Mrs. Althea.

"You two ought to be called Theory and Practice," cried Mrs. Brand.

"Before I was laid up, I hope I was not merely Theory," said Mrs. Althea.

"Surely no," said Mrs. Kitty. "You always used to attend to the butter and honey. And you keep the accounts still."

"Head and Hands, then," said Mrs. Brand.

"My head is not worth what it was," said Mrs. Althea, sighing.

"Ah, we all feel our faculties decay as time wears away," said Mrs. Brand, soothingly.

Here Hannah entered with a brace of pheasants and leash of partridges, together with a note for Mrs. Althea.

" What fine birds ! " cried Mrs. Brand.
The note was from Rhoda ; and ran thus :—

" Carlton Hall, Wednesday Afternoon.

" DEAR MRS. ALTHEA,

" My uncle begs you to accept the results of his morning's sport ; and I take the same opportunity of mentioning that Mr. Glyn, hearing from me how beautifully you used to etch, will be happy to lend you his collection of etchings by Paul Sandby, if it will give you any pleasure to look them through."

" How very kind ! " said Mrs. Althea, who was reading her note aloud. She opened her little letter-case, and wrote a line of glad acceptance to Rhoda, while Mrs. Kitty disbursed a shilling for the bearer.

" Rhoda will soon come to see me," said Mrs. Althea. " She saw Pamela to-day, and found she had a bad cold."

" Who are these young people, pray ? " said Mrs. Brand ; " and who is Mr. Glyn ? "

Mrs. Kitty explained.

" Ah, he may be as good-looking and high-born as you please," cried Mrs. Brand ; " but I know I never could bear him."

" Why ? "

" Can you ask ? Because he occupies Bever

Hollow. I shall always consider him a usurper."

"A man cannot be said to usurp what he has bought and paid for," said Mrs. Althea. "We were very thankful to find such a liberal purchaser."

"Yes, indeed!" said Kitty, energetically.

"Well, I'm glad you found him such," said Mrs. Brand. "I hav'n't a notion how much such a place as Bever Hollow might fetch."

The servant entering to clear the table, neither of the sisters thought it necessary to enlighten her; and Kitty presently leaving the room, Mrs. Althea challenged Mrs. Brand to a game of chess. Mrs. Brand declared she should like it uncommonly, but doubted whether it would be civil to Kate to play a game which would exclude one of the three. On Mrs. Kitty's return, however, she brought a cribbage-board with her, and challenged her friend to a game, to which she made no objection. Mrs. Althea smiled inwardly, and took up a book.

"The kitchen chimney's a-fire, mum," said Hannah, putting in her head at the door.

"O goodness!" exclaimed Mrs. Brand.

"Don't flurry yourself, Althea!" cried Mrs. Kitty, running off. "Call the men, Hannah—"

"No, no," cried Mrs. Althea, "empty the salt-box on the fire!"

Kitty gave a look of delighted intelligence and darted out, while Mrs. Brand sedulously re-arranged the overturned cribbage-board.

Before she had accomplished this, Kitty returned, scorched, but complacent.

"And the fire?" said Mrs. Brand.

"Out!" said Kitty. "The salt produced some chemical change, and extinguished the flames. There's the advantage, you see, of Head and Hands!"

CHAPTER XXII.

Mr. Glyn in Private Life.

Would you the bloom of youth should last ?
 'Tis virtue that must bind it fast ;
 An easy carriage, wholly free
 From sour reserves, or levity ;
 Good-natured mirth, an open heart,
 And looks unskilled in any art ;
 Humility enough to own
 The foibles which a friend makes known,
 And decent pride enough to know
 The worth that virtue can bestow.

MOORE'S *Fables for the Female Sex.*

MRS. Glyn, when she found her son had ridden out, sent for Pamela to amuse her.

"I thought I heard a strange voice in the gallery just now," said she; "a female voice."

"It was Miss Rhoda Hill's, ma'am," said Pamela. "She felt herself awkward downstairs without you; and therefore made her way up to the nursery."

"I wonder she came in at all," said Mrs. Glyn. "What need was there for more than inquiries and cards?"

"Mr. Glyn went out to them, ma'am, Miss Hill told me, and begged them to come in, because it was raining."

"Oh, if Charles thought it worth while to go out and press them, that altered the case. I dare say he misses me, poor fellow. But these *parvenus* have a knack of being forward. What do you think of this young lady, my dear? Have you seen much of her?"

"We have met two or three times at Mrs. Althea's," said Pamela. "That is all. Only, there is such an absence of constraint and formality at the Hill House that every one is at ease, and people soon learn to understand one another."

"Humph! And your impression of this Miss Rhoda—"

"My impression is, that she is a very nice sort of girl," said Pamela. "Very gentle, sweet-tempered, cheerful, and accomplished. Not very strong-minded, perhaps."

"None the worse, may be, for that," said Mrs. Glyn, sighing.

"Dear madam, do you think so?"

"I don't know that it adds to our happiness or makes us liked," said Mrs. Glyn. "I am generally thought to have a strong mind; but half my life I have been rowing against the stream—fishing in troubled waters."

"Well," said Pamela, "I feel quite sure that I could neither love nor respect a weak-minded person like a strong-minded one."

"It makes them very yielding," said Mrs. Glyn.

"Not always, I think," said Pamela. "They fret, and are peevish, sometimes, and do not know their own mind about the most trifling things; and sometimes yielding is morally wrong."

"Yes, sometimes: not in the little daily affairs of life."

"I'm afraid I am not very yielding," said Pamela.

"Then you would not suit Charles," cried Mrs. Glyn. "He likes a woman to be as soft as pap."

Pamela laughed, and said she was surprised to hear it. She should have thought he would have liked a little more spirit.

"Oh no! Spirit does not suit him at all," said Mrs. Glyn. "He may amuse himself with it, but he'll never marry a woman of spirit."

"Was Mrs. Charles Glyn very yielding ma'am?"

"My dear, she was so to excess. She was brought up among Dissenters, but immediately acceded to Charles's wish that she should conform to the Church."

"Did not that show a little indifference, ma'am?"

"Not to *him*," said Mrs. Glyn.

"No, certainly."

"And she preferred town to country;

but, to please him, scarcely ever went to London."

"That was very amiable."

"Why, yes. . . I was against the match at first, not on account of herself, but of her family, and was very cool to her for a while; but really it was so impossible to find anything objectionable in a young woman who never made an objection, that I found I could not keep it up—poor little woman."

"I suppose," resumed Mrs. Glyn, after a pause, "that the Miss Hills are to be ranked among your strong-minded women?"

"Yes, certainly so, I think. Mrs. Kitty would not have embarked in her farming otherwise, nor could Mrs. Althea have supported her long illness so well."

"She has every comfort, I suppose?"

"Yes, except bodily ease. Her friends let her want for nothing."

"Humph! we have never been included among them, and yet one would like to contribute something."

"Mr. Glyn is going to do so, ma'am. He has commissioned Miss Rhoda Hill to offer her the loan of his Paul Sandby etchings."

"Ho! And do you suppose she will care to see them?"

"Oh yes. She is, or has been, a good artist."

"Does she suffer much, do you think?"

"At times. But she says she gets used to it."

"I doubt if I could ever get used to pain," said Mrs. Glyn, wincing. "Depend on it, Miss Bohun, if she says so sincerely, she must be a strong-minded woman. People say those things insincerely sometimes."

"I am sure Mrs. Althea is not insincere," said Pamela. "But she makes the best of it; from affection to her sister, from an energetic disposition, and from a cheerful submission to the will of God."

"Miss Rickards is another strong-minded woman," said Mrs. Glyn.

"Oh, I don't call her so," said Pamela, laughing; "strong-tempered, rather."

"Well, I believe what is called strong mind, might sometimes better be called bad temper," said Mrs. Glyn. "A strong will, that is selfishly bent on having its own way. People of this kind succeed; but they are not liked. We prefer those who have more address, more finesse."

"Ah, I hate finesse, ma'am," cried Pamela hardily; "and could never practise address."

"Well, you have something intrepid about you, I can see; but, my dear, you have lived very little in the world."

"Very little indeed," said Pamela, laughing; "but papa thinks—"

She was interrupted by a violent fit of coughing; and Mrs. Glyn, compassionating her, insisted from making her talk, and let her knit

in silence, till summoned to the nursery tea-table.

" You had a pleasant ride, I hope, my dear Charles," said Mrs. Glyn, when her son next looked in on her.

" Pretty well, ma'am, thank you. I fell in with Symes coming back, and we had a good deal of talk about his bay mare."

" That would hardly suffice for a pleasant ride, I should think," said Mrs. Glyn, drily. " You went out with companions, I understood."

" Oh, Mr. and Miss Hill. Yes; and the old gentleman turns out to be a great chess-player. I've accepted a challenge of his, for really there is not a good player hereabouts, and I am getting rusty. Miss Hill—"

" Miss Rhoda Hill."

" No, mamma. *Miss* Hill asked me to lunch there to-morrow, and then Mr. Hill and I are to have a set to."

" Well, but *Miss* Rhoda Hill was your riding companion ? "

" Rhoda—yes. She is a niceish little girl. Oh, I like her, I assure you. But I suspect that her cousins treat her in a Cinderella sort of a way. I shall see a little more into it to-morrow. It is very wrong of them; and, although her position is at present subordinate to theirs, her connexions are better, for her mother was a Vane."

"Indeed! why, we intermarried with the Vanes. Not very recently, though."

"No. So I told her, and laughed, and claimed her for a cousin."

"That she is *not*."

"No; only it amuses one to get hold of something of this sort to laugh about. It makes a starting-point; gives you something in common, which it is rather difficult to find in that house."

"Difficult, and not very desirable," said Mrs. Glyn. "There's the second dinner-bell. So you are going away without asking me how I am."

"My dear mother, you took the word out of my mouth at first coming in. You know you began at once about the Hills. I am afraid you have had a long, lonely afternoon."

"No; when I felt lonely, I sent for Miss Bohun. Go, my dear Charles, go; your fish will be cold."

And, as he went off, she said to herself, "Yes, yes; I sent for Miss Bohun; whenever I feel lonely, I can send for Miss Bohun. No thanks to you, though, Master Charles."

When Mr. Glyn returned the next day from lunching with the Hills, he went up to his mother in great excitement. Pamela, who was taking up a dropped row of stitching for Mrs. Glyn, remained to finish it.

"Mamma," said he, sitting down by her in her easy chair, "we had quite an event this

morning; a shocking one, I assure you. The two eldest Miss Hills had made more of a toilet than ladies generally do so early in the morning, I think; and were in dresses ridiculously thin for this time of year,—clear, and sticking very much out, you know. One of them, whisking by the fire rather carelessly, was in flames in a moment. Mr. Hill and I were deep in our chess, when a scream made me look round, and there was Charlotte, all on fire, rushing frantically towards the door; when what did that noble girl, Rhoda, do, but seize her, drag her back, and fling her on the rug, which she wrapped round her till she extinguished the flames."

"Ah!" cried Pamela.

"Well done, indeed!" cried Mrs. Glyn. "My dear Charles, were not the poor girls dreadfully hurt?"

"Miss Charlotte was carried off in hysterics, and I heard a great uproar going on in the house—bells ringing, men sent for doctor, and so forth. Also a great cry for cotton wool. But—

The man recovered of the wound,
It was the dog that died.

Miss Charlotte proved to be scarcely singed: while Rhoda, who saved her life, had awfully scorched her pretty, pretty hands and arms."

"Poor, poor Rhoda!" ejaculated Pamela.

"Poor Rhoda!" repeated Mrs. Glyn.

"Yes; I thought Miss Charlotte might as well have kissed her," said Mr. Glyn.

"My dear Charles, consider her own danger, and fright, and pain. She had not time to think about it."

"Oh yes, mamma; *I've* had time to think about it all the way home; and she might have given a kiss of impulse. But there was no impulse."

"But where was the elder sister? where was Miss Hill?"

"Oh, she came running out of the little drawing-room, and, to do her justice, was frightened enough; but she did nothing but scream. She patted the rug down a little on her sister, when the fire was quite out. Then she went off, with her arm round Charlotte's waist, Rhoda following. I, holding the door open for them, said to Rhoda, 'You are severely burnt, I'm sure.' She looked very white, but said, 'Oh, it's of no consequence; I shall get some cotton wool. I am so glad I saved Charlotte!' And her eyes were full of tears."

"Poor soul!" said Mrs. Glyn.

Pamela sighed deeply, and did not go away.

"So you waited," pursued his mother.

"I waited to hear the doctor's report. Mr. Hill, you know, wanted some one to enable him to bear the suspense; for, till Forest came, mark you, we did not know how much Miss Charlotte was burnt, but supposed her very

seriously injured : especially as she made so much noise about it. So Mr. Hill and I played out our game, and I mated him, which was not surprising under the circumstances ; I don't say it in disparagement of his play at all ; I know he wasn't thinking of what he was about. So Forest came at last, and quite eased the poor old gentleman's mind by telling him Miss Charlotte had sustained no hurt whatsoever beyond the fright, which had given her nerves a shock that made it as well for her to keep her room the rest of the day ; but that Miss Rhoda was much more injured. Here the poor old gentleman became affected, and murmured, 'Poor Rhoda ! dear Rhoda ! she saved my dear child's life.' I said, 'No permanent injury to that pretty hand and arm, I hope, Mr. Forest ?' He smiled at me and said, 'No permanent injury, but a good deal of present pain.' 'May I go and see my dear girls ?' says Mr. Hill, wiping his eyes. 'By all means, sir,' said Forest ; so then, you know, I shook hands and came away. I fancy Rhoda came in for a kiss from her uncle at any rate. Mamma, I hope you keep plenty of cotton wool in the house ; the children may catch fire some day. It's an awful thing to see, I assure you, a woman all in flames ! "

CHAPTER XXIII.

Board and Lodging.

Hark ! how the rain pours o'er the wide champaign,
 And swells the torrents rushing down the hills !
 Are living things abroad on such a night ?

* * * * *

Some doctor's horse dashes along the road
 To distant patient. From his warm fireside
 The good man goes, amid the wintry storm,
 To some sick couch, perchance to look on death.

MESSRS. Forest and Mildmay had a busy time of it this winter ; I am afraid to say how many horses they knocked up. " But then," as George said, " we are knocked up too. I wish sometimes, just as I am warm in bed, that the wire of that horrid night-bell would break. I never could see the joke of painting up ' Knock and ring.' People are safe enough to do both if they want you ; it's a liberty they never require to be invited to take ; and if they don't want you, where's the good ? ' Please don't knock and ring, if you can possibly help it,' would be more to the purpose ! "

" Ah, you talk with the recklessness of a

man in full practice," said Mrs. Althea. "Time was, when you were glad enough to hear the night-bell."

"Well, then, that time is completely gone by. Now that we are quite by ourselves, dear Mrs. Althea, see! here is the crumpled little yellow bit of paper docketed 'Althea's hair.'"

"It—it looks like his hand," said she, after bending over it closely, as if short-sighted—George thought, to conceal a tear. "Thank you—" returning it to him.

"Nay, it's of no value to me; I shall not keep it. If you do not want it, I will put it in the fire."

"Please, don't!"

And her hand was hastily stretched out to reclaim it.

"He was an old friend," said she; "an old and dear friend. So we will not burn this little vestige of his kind and friendly feeling towards me."

"Something a good deal more than that, ma'am, I'm thinking," said George. "However, we'll change the subject. Is it not a bore that I have never been able to get over to Bever Hollow since I last saw you?"

"What has hindered you?"

"The queer old lady likes Forest best! So does that *nonchalant* fellow, her son. 'Forest,' says he, 'I'll be obliged by your giving my mother's case your own particular, personal

attention. Old ladies don't get over these things sometimes.' So, what could Forest do, you know? or what could I? I'm going to ride over there this morning, though, because Forest is called away in a different direction. Well, and where is my dear friend Mrs. Brand?"

"She and Kitty are gone to look at some lodgings; rather against the grain, I suspect."

"Why, she doesn't want to live here always, I suppose!"

"I think she would be very glad to remain with us till the spring. It would be both cheaper and more cheerful than being in solitary lodgings."

"Let her pay for her board, then!"

"My dear George!"

"Let her pay for her board, ma'am, I say! I'll broach the subject to her in the neatest way in the world! Have a *quid pro quo*, at any rate."

"I don't think it would be an equivalent, even if we could accept it with any delicacy. She would then consider herself at liberty to remain as long as she liked: and it would destroy the happiness of my life."

"Perhaps the proposal would frighten her away."

"More likely, make her very indignant. Oh no, George; I must take what comes. However trying such things may be, they are part of the discipline which we need."

" Well, ma'am, if you think so ; though I should have real pleasure in broaching the subject to her—"

" I dare say you would ! "

" But, since it must not be, I can only regret it. So, now for Pamela and Bever Hollow. Oh, Mrs. Althea, if *she* should like Forest best ! "

Mrs. Althea had pretty good reason to know there was no danger of that.

Considering that Mrs. Brand and Mrs. Kitty certainly were not in the house at the time this dialogue took place, the subject started by Mrs. Kitty on her return had a singular affinity to it.

" Althea ! " said she, sitting down close to her sister, and speaking in a low tone, very eagerly, " while we were out, Eliza made a most generous proposal."

" What was it ? " said Mrs. Althea, with a kind of presentiment.

" The lodgings wouldn't do," said Kitty, rapidly ; " and there seems so little chance of getting any this quarter, the weather being so unfavourable for moving, and so forth, that Eliza, in the handsomest way, has offered to pay for her board and lodging with us while she remains ; saying we are so endeared to her that she cannot bear the thought of going before the spring. So, I hope, Althea, every objection is removed. A guinea and a half—no, a sovereign and a half, a week ! Half her income, you know ! "

"What I feared!" ejaculated Mrs. Althea.

"What do you mean?" said Kitty.

"Not to accept it, on any account, Kitty. Thirty shillings a week would be no compensation for our loss of independence."

"Don't talk of shillings, it sounds so commercial," said Mrs. Kitty. "Eliza is one of the very few persons, nay, the only one, I believe, from whom we could accept any terms of the sort: but she feels so completely one of ourselves—"

"I don't feel her one of ourselves!"

"That we can, without humiliation, receive an equivalent from her. At least, I know I am not above being beholden to my friend."

"It would be no equivalent, dear Kitty."

"O Althea!—What, not for board and lodging?"

"Not for peace and comfort."

"Why, what difference would it make in the way we are going on already? There is no time fixed for her going, you know."

"More the pity; but as long as she is here only on sufferance, she is in a less formidable position than if she paid for what she had."

"Well, you use very odd expressions, Althea, sometimes, considering how particular you are at other times. Formidable, and on sufferance, indeed! For my part, I consider it a very desirable offer. We secure a cheerful com-

panion for the winter, and at no expense : nay, I'll answer for making it something into pocket."

" Oh, I care for nothing into pocket," said Mrs. Althea. " Why should we take boarders ? We never did, when we were worse off."

" Well, we have not time, just now, to pursue the question, for she will be coming in directly."

" Yes, dear Kitty, and that is one of the disadvantages of her being here ; we never can, at our leisure, pursue *any* question. It was so about the extra fire ; it was so about the Sunday breakfast hour—"

" Oh, don't let us rake up those old grievances. Take time to think about it, as you said to me when she first wrote to propose coming. Take time to think about it, till bedtime : or even till to-morrow morning, if you will. In the meantime, we will say nothing about it."

And away hurried Mrs. Kitty.

She did not give her sister till the morrow, however, to deliberate ; but, having assisted her at night in her painful progress to her bed, sent away Hannah, whose aid was always required on these occasions, and sitting down on the edge of Mrs. Althea's bed, said eagerly—

" Well, have you thought about it ? "

" About what ? " said Mrs. Althea, reluctantly.

" About Eliza paying us."

"I thought I was to have till to-morrow—"

"Yes, but it seems so thankless to hang back, that if you really know your own mind—"

"I do, Kitty. My mind is not to accept her for a boarder."

"Then there's thirty shillings a week literally flung away!" exclaimed Kitty.

"Well, my dear Kitty, we don't want them: at least, we did not before Mrs. Brand came, and shall not when she is gone. She raises the bills, I know. I was surprised to find the wine running short."

"You have no right to speak of those things if you will not accept an equivalent. You refuse to clear thirty—"

"Clear? No, dear Kitty, there's your mistake! You are looking on it as clear profit, whereas you will find her have her money for her money's worth, every penny of it. A fire in her bedroom, meat for breakfast—"

"Althea, how *can* you be so shabby!—Good night."

"Kitty!—dear Kitty!"

But Kitty was gone. It was the first time she had left her sister at night without kissing her; and Mrs. Althea's pillow was steeped with tears.

"Even George will be against me," thought she, "for he was for a *quid pro quo*. And yet I feel that I am right, and that it will be misery if I yield. O Lord! undertake for me!"

And again these lines were brought to her—

Commit thou all thy ways ;

and the angel who brought them, watched by her till she slept.

The first sight Mrs. Althea had of Mrs. Brand's countenance the next morning showed her that she must henceforth expect war to the knife. Had she temporised and accepted the pay, or been insincere and pretended that no monetary obligations could exist between such dear friends, an unsafe, uncertain peace would have ensued; but doing neither, Mrs. Brand decided that she was an avowed and powerful enemy, and resolved on acting accordingly.

Therefore, directly after breakfast, there was a yawn, followed by a long sigh. "Heigho! I must lace on my storm-boots, Kitty, and go lodging-hunting, though the weather is unpropitious; for I am too much for your sister, who has done wisely in reminding me that I am but a stranger and sojourner here."

"You can't go out!" cried Kitty. "It is going to snow."

"I must be quick, then, dear, and start before it begins. Don't expect me before you see me; though that is a stupid expression, isn't it, Kate? Neither sense nor grammar. But you overlook all my faults, dear; and they are many."

"I don't think so," said Kitty.

"You dear kind Kate," cried Mrs. Brand.

going up to her and kissing her, “you really are a friend, Kate! a sterling friend!”

And with a look of defiance at Mrs. Althea over Kitty’s shoulder, which Kitty could not see, Mrs. Brand, smiling, left the room; equipped herself, with great *fracas*, in ten minutes, and out of the house in two minutes more. Kitty, who had hurried after her, and talked to her at first in a very raised voice and then in a very low one, saw her off, and remained watching her at the front door, in the cold wind, till out of sight; while Mrs. Althea, pierced by the draught, shivered at the fireside and drew her shawl round her. She saw no living face, except Hannah’s, till dinner-time.

Then Kitty came in, in perturbation. “It has began to snow now, at any rate, and poor Eliza has not returned! If she does not brave it, she may be kept out till dark. Dear me, if she does not soon make her appearance I shall be quite uneasy.”

“My dear Kitty, you and I used to think nothing of a little snow like this.”

“Don’t say such things, Althea; I’ve no patience! . . . Oh, here she comes!”

And Mrs. Althea, for once, was glad of the advent of Mrs. Brand.

Kitty gave her a most voluble welcome, and hurried up with her to hear all there was to hear, in Mrs. Brand’s room. When she brought her down to dinner, a traveller from the North

Pole could hardly have been treated with more *restige*. Kitty, returning from the dining-room, was bringing her sister half of a fine apple, when, her foot catching in the carpet, she tripped forward and would have fallen on her face, had not Mrs. Althea, excited to sudden exertion, risen hastily from her couch and caught her in her arms; kissing her before she let her go.

Mrs. Brand, standing in the doorway, burst into a laugh.

"A miracle, a miracle!" cried she. "The bedridden walk! See, the beneficial effects of surprise! Well, Althea, accept *my* sincere congratulations for one; and try to keep it up."

Both of the sisters, for the moment, looked petrified.

"Althea *cannot* keep it up, unluckily," said Mrs. Kitty, shaking up the cushions under her panting sister. "I wish she could." And a tear twinkled in her eyes as she bent down and returned the kiss.

"God bless you, Kitty," murmured Mrs. Althea.

Mrs. Brand saw she must, for the moment, lower her tone.

"I am sure I wish she could, as much as anybody," said she, in a softer key. "Do you feel much shaken, dear Althea?"

"A little," said Mrs. Althea.

"And you, Kate; for it was you that got the greatest shake, after all. My dear soul, you might have hurt yourself very seriously, with your head against the fender."

"Yes, if Althea had not saved me," said Mrs. Kitty seriously.

"And by the bye, Kate, where is the apple that caused this mighty commotion? not the apple of discord, but the apple of concord . . . Ha! here it is, rolled half under the table, and covered with dust. This won't do for Althea now: stay, I'll peel it afresh, and make a most delicate little morsel of it. Why I cried out 'A miracle' just now, was because, by one of those jumbles of dissimilar ideas one has sometimes, I could not help thinking of that archbishop's niece, who threw down her crutches before the 'holy coat' at Treves. Another singular instance occurs to me. Do you remember Olivia Staines? A lovely creature, you know! Well, at the age of eighteen, her voice went completely away: nothing could get her to speak out of a whisper; 'she couldn't.' Well, physicians were in vain: her family became seriously uneasy; every one was talking of poor dear Olivia. Well, she came to stay with us; for my mother, who had a notion there was a little temper in it, fancied she could cure it. She went on two or three days. Still, nothing but whispering. One day, we were talking of Harry Brand. 'A flame of yours, Olivia,' says mamma

islyly. ‘Mine?’ cries Olivia, quite aloud. ‘A miracle!’ cries mamma, and bursts out laughing. You never saw a creature so confused as Olivia. After that, there could be no more whispering, you know. She protested she was as much surprised as any of us at her voice coming back.”

“An agreeable surprise!” said Mrs. Kitty.

“But to what does this story apply?” said Mrs. Althea. “What does it illustrate? To what does it refer?”

“Illustrate! Refer!” repeated Mrs. Brand, looking rapidly from one sister to the other; “Oh, it does not refer to anything! You know I’m the most inconsequent creature in the world.”

“Just move your chair the least bit, Eliza,” said Mrs. Kitty, who was threading a large needle with coarse packing-thread, “and I’ll cobble up that rent in the carpet till it can be done better, so that at any rate it shall not trip any one up.”

Mrs. Brand did as she was requested; and Kitty, dropping on her knees, set vigorously to work, and soon accomplished her task. Rising up with her face much reddened, as soon as it was finished,—“There, mistress,” said she cheerfully to Mrs. Althea, “that will prevent me from cutting any more capers, I hope: and you from flying to the rescue.”

Mrs. Althea affectionately smiled; and inwardly repeated her ejaculation—

“God bless you, Kitty!”

CHAPTER XXIV.

Mischief.

Faint friends fallen out most cruel foemen be.

SPENSER.

"**M**AMMA," said Mr. Glyn—who used this address, half from affection, half from affectation—"do you know, I don't at all like the Miss Hills."

"I never have liked them," said Mrs. Glyn.

"No; you took up a strong prejudice against them from the first; rather unreasonably, I think. I resolved I would not be unreasonable, but give them a fair trial: the result has not been in their favour."

"Has anything particular resulted, pray?"

"I rode over there this morning, to inquire after Miss Rhoda; and when I arrived, the poor girl was getting a complete rating. I met George Mildmay riding away from the house; he's a conceited young fellow, I incline to think.

He had probably been examining the burnt hands, and perhaps may have expressed, as I have done, his regret at the temporary injury to their beauty—nothing more natural—though a young surgeon had better not deal in such speeches. Anyhow, I suppose he had given umbrage to the two cousins ; for, as I went in, rather closely on the servant's heels, I heard Charlotte Hill say in the most galling tone, ‘ You think too much of his attentions ! ’ And when I went in, I found Rhoda positively in tears ! ”

“ Humph ! ”

“ They all looked confused enough. Rhoda as much as any. In fact, she blushed crimson ; and when I asked her how she was, could hardly answer me. She soon made an excuse to leave the room : I should have opened the door for her at any rate, but, of course, with her poor, wounded hands. Turning round, I caught the sisters exchanging looks of irony. *My* attentions, too, gave umbrage, it seemed ! And so they shall, if those two girls are going to be jealous, and that young prig is going to be officious.”

“ Take care, Charles, you don’t burn your own fingers.”

“ Trust me for that, ma’am.”

“ I think the best way would be for you to go near them as little as possible. They are no pleasure to us. Why not quietly drop them ? ”

"Drop poor little Rhoda? I should be sorry to do that. Besides, the old gentleman is a worthy old gentleman, as times go. It is only his daughters who are offensive; and if I have, as I rather think I have, the power of teaching them a lesson, I will."

"Oh, well, you must do as you please." And Mrs. Glyn composedly took up her knitting; caring very little, apparently, how much Rhoda's peace of mind might be involved in the course Mr. Glyn was about to pursue.

"Talk of a fellow, and he appears!" said Mr. Glyn. "Here's Mildmay riding up to the house now." And he sauntered off to his warm study and newspapers.

"May I have a word with you, Mr. Glyn?" said George, looking very bright and fresh, as they met in the hall.

"Oh, certainly," said Mr. Glyn; "pray step in here."

"The winter has set in with unusual severity," said George, "and prices are rising, and will rise still higher. Coals thirty-six shillings a ton already. We are getting up a little subscription to enable the very poor to have coals, bread, and rice at a diminished rate, and I thought you might like to put your name down."

"Certainly," said Mr. Glyn. "It's a good thing, I suppose? I don't understand these matters much; nor, perhaps (laughing), do you."

" Well, I hope I understand a little of them," said George. " You see, our practice brings us a good deal behind the scenes so that we know pretty well who are deserving and who are not; who need help, and what sort of help they need."

" Precisely," said Mr. Glyn.

" Here's the paper," said George, " drawn up by Mr. Bohun, who, again, is pretty well up to these things. You'll find nothing chimerical or extravagant proposed. People put down just what they will; but there are not many names down yet, because I brought it to you early, thinking you should be one of the first."

" Precisely. 'Mr. Hill, ten pounds.' That's pretty fair, isn't it?"

" Oh, it's munificent; but we don't expect many to give at that rate. He's a good-natured man, you see, and I think I'm a bit of a favourite of his."

" ' Miss Hill, five pounds; Miss Charlotte Hill, five pounds.' . . . Dear me, this is very handsome! ' Miss Rhoda Hill, ten shillings.' "

" Oh, you must not judge of her by that," cried George, eagerly. " There's as much difference between their five pounds and her ten shillings, as between the offerings of the Pharisees and the widow that had but a mite."

" Ah! That's putting it rather strong, Mr. Mildmay."

"Too strongly, I admit," said George, rather ashamed. "However, it's not only what we give, but what we deny ourselves, that constitutes charity. Now, I happen to know that Miss Rhoda Hill has given up eating potatoes, that the poor may have more."

Mr. Glyn burst into a laugh. George looked annoyed. Mr. Glyn, who observed him closely, saw that he did so.

"What good on earth can she hope to do by it?" said he. "The poor girl probably eats but one potato a day; an Irishman eats half a gallon. What a chimera! How absurd!"

"The principle is not absurd," said George. "The consumption of one person set against that of another. And we know that if every one relieved one, all would be relieved."

"Just so. Oh, the principle, as you say, is charming—charming! She's a charming girl, Mr. Mildmay. It was only the diminutive scale on which she could put her principle into practice, that tickled my fancy."

"If we do all we can, no more can be expected of us," said George. "Example is something; and I do not think the two elder Miss Hills can daily help themselves to potatoes while their cousin refrains, without feeling their consciences pricked."

"I doubt very much their consciences being so tender," said Mr. Glyn. "I hope Miss

Rhoda does not give up her potato for the sake of pricking them."

"Certainly not," said George. "I understand she expressed very simply her conviction that if all or many of the upper classes, who have such variety in their diet, were to give up the use of this one root, which the poor cannot to their satisfaction exchange for any other, there would be enough, at a moderate price, for those who make them their chief food."

"Very fair."

"And, to evidence that she did not preach what she would not practise, she gave up her one potato."

"I wonder if the cook dresses one less daily, Mr. Mildmay. Ha! ha!"

"Miss Rhoda Hill has no control over that. She has made one convert, however,—her uncle."

"Ha!"

"I think she will very likely make another of Mrs. Althea."

"And another of yourself?"

"That's my affair," said George, smiling. "However, not to be closer about my own concerns than other people's, I'll confess that she has. So, you see, this good little creature has actually saved, or will save, four persons' consumption."

"She is a good little creature," said Mr. Glyn, with some feeling. "If we all did as

much in proportion, a good deal would be done."

"A good deal," said George.

"Well, I shall put down my name for ten pounds. I don't see why I should give less than Mr. Hill: and here's my money. Now, I'll step up-stairs with you to my mother, and tell her about it, and I dare say she will give something too."

In Mrs. Glyn's room they found Pamela and the children; so George, being able to see all his patients at once, was obliged, with chagrin, to abandon the hope of a *tête-à-tête* that time. However, Mrs. Glyn gave him ten pounds for the charitable fund, so he went away with his pockets full of money as well as a heart full of love.

"O Christmas! Christmas!" inwardly ejaculated he, "never did schoolboy more impatiently desire thee! However, thy advent is not far off."

Here he came in sight of Mrs. Brand, who was walking at the rate of a penny-postman. Had a lane or by-road presented itself, he would not have minded making a circuit to avoid so obnoxious a person; but he scorned to turn about and fly; while to dash forward without recognition would hardly consist with the manners of a gentleman. He just touched his horse with the spur, therefore, and was preparing to pass her with an amiable bow, when

she made him a sign to stop, which he instantly obeyed, fearing it might have something to do with Mrs. Althea.

"My dear Mr. Mildmay," began she, in a bland voice, "this opportunity is most fortunate, for I have long been desirous of a short private conference."

"I am always at the service of the ladies, ma'am," said George; "but might not a better time and place be found? This wind cuts like a knife, and you are standing in a puddle."

"I am in goloshes," said Mrs. Brand; "but pray walk your horse gently, and we shall have the wind behind us. Oh, Mr. Mildmay, I'm *very* anxious about my dear friend! . . ."

"About Mrs. Althea?" said George, hastily.

"About Kate," said Mrs. Brand. "Of course, we are all anxious about Althea, but she has now been going on so long, that our sympathies, you know, are getting a little worn out.

Whereas, dear, cheerful Kate has such courage and sprightliness that nobody suspects anything is the matter with *her*."

"What is the matter with her, ma'am?" said George. "The last time I called at the Hill House, I heard her whistling in the pantry."

"Ah, that was her way of keeping up Althea's spirits," said Mrs. Brand; "she carries it off so well."

"Carries off what, ma'am?" said George.

"This crick," said Mrs. Brand.

"This *what?*?" cried George, reining up his horse suddenly, that he might hear what she said.

"My dear Mr. Mildmay," said Mrs. Brand, laying her hand on his bridle, and lowering her voice, though not a creature was in sight, "did you ever hear of Kate carrying Althea from one end of the room to the other, to look at the stars?"

"Never!" cried George. "Did she though?"

"She did, I promise you."

"Hurra! Mrs. Kitty, I honour you for it!" cried he, with one of his boyish bursts of enthusiasm. "It was famously done of you!"

"Not very famous of Althea to let her do it, though!" said Mrs. Brand with asperity; "I've really no patience with her!"

"Well, it does not look like Mrs. Althea's usual prudence and thoughtfulness for others, I must confess," said George, gravely.

"My dear Mr. Mildmay, you little know a good many things that pass in that house. Why now, what can be more essential to health than a well-ventilated bedroom? And yet Kate, to be within reach of Althea, sleeps in a little closet that has no chimney in it."

"Nay, Mrs. Brand, I know that little room perfectly well, having attended Mrs. Kitty in it more than once; and though, as you say, there is no chimney, there is a ventilator, and the

room has always appeared to me perfectly airy—”

“ Draughty, if you will, not airy.”

“ The best proof, ma’am, of it’s not being an unwholesome apartment is, that Mrs. Kitty has slept in it these five years and enjoyed robust health. But, about this crick—I want to know—”

“ Ah, Mr. Mildmay, *I* want to know, too. But she won’t hear of examination or inquiry. She’d kill me, I think, if I hinted it to Althea. ‘My fear is for the spine—’”

“ Bless me! I must talk a little to my friend Kitty!”

“ She won’t hear you, I know she won’t!”

“ But, ma’am, if she won’t hear you nor me, what’s to be done?”

“ Nothing can be done, Mr. Mildmay. With that firm mind, it’s my opinion nothing *can* be done. It’s deplorable, but cannot be helped. Say nothing, therefore, unless some very favourable opportunity should occur—say nothing at present. Above all, say nothing to Althea!”

“ Trust me, ma’am. And now I fear I must wish you good morning. Pray, whither may you be bound?”

“ Ah,” said she, with a shrug and a smile, “ I’m lodging-hunting. I’m one too many where I am—so Althea thinks—and you know what Dante says about the bitterness of another

man's bread and the steepness of another man's stairs, when he does not make you welcome to them. So, though I would gladly occupy the little closet without a chimney to be with my dear friends—(and *very* dear they are to me, Mr. Mildmay !) yet, as the feeling is not reciprocated in one quarter, I'm lodging-hunting ! ”

“ But,—in this direction ?—What lodgings can you hope to find ? ”

“ Well, I understand Mr. Knight is thinking of moving. ”

“ Indeed ? that's news to me,” said George, slightly raising his eyebrows. “ I thought he must be starving on his practice.”

“ Don't say I told you—don't spread the report,” cried Mrs. Brand.

“ Not I, ma'am ; *you've* told the person most interested in knowing it ! ”

“ Why, of course, there must be a very poor picking for a medical man in such a small place as Collington,” said Mrs. Brand.

“ 'Tis not the want of population so much as his own want of—well, I'll say no more,” cried George. “ Good morning.”

“ *Good* morning ! ”

And they parted, outwardly, on the most amicable terms.

“ I shall go and see about this crick,” thought George. “ No time like the present.—So Knight is going to vacate the field ! —thought he would ! An ill-conditioned fellow

as ever breathed; didn't deserve to succeed. However, that's between me and myself. What crumbs the bear leaves, the hen may pick up, saith the author of *Waverley*. I should like amazingly to settle down with *Pamela* in Collington. We'd soon get roses to trail all over the cottage. Ah, but Mrs. Brand wants it. And, after all, this may be a false report of hers—Knight may not go."

A brisk trot soon brought him to the side approach of the Hill House. Here, looking out of a very small casement, not higher above his head than half the length of his arm, was to be seen Mrs. Kitty, equipped in a dark blue cloth pelisse that had been her mother's, and a round beaver hat. George, after gallantly kissing the tips of his gloves to her, which she returned by smiles and nods, rode over the wet spongy turf, close under her window, and looked up at her just in the attitude of Stothard's Don Quixote talking to the innkeeper's daughter and Maritornes.

"How are you, Mrs. Kitty?" began he kindly.

"Purely," said Mrs. Kitty; "but Althea has had a bad night, poor love, and is now asleep."

"Then I'll not disturb her," said George. "I shall be this way again in a day or two. Can a fellow say a few words to you without being overheard?"

"Not a creature within earshot," said Mrs. Kitty—"but stay, I'll go to Eliza's window, which is on a lower level than this, for I know she's not within; and there we can talk without raising our voices."

George rode under Mrs. Brand's window, where Mrs. Kitty soon reappeared.

"You are not afraid of the air, in your hat and pelisse, I suppose?" said he.

"Not a bit," said Mrs. Kitty. "Never you fear for me—I'm not going to be upon your books just now, I can tell you."

"Well, I'm not quite so sure about that," said George seriously. "What of this sprain?"

"Then Eliza's been talking to you!" cried Kitty quickly. "She shall catch it!—"

"Sprains are not catching, my dear friend; and seriously, I am anxious about you, and want to know what is the matter."

"Nothing at all is the matter. Eliza took alarm without the least need for it. I'm sure it was very kind of her, but I wish to goodness I had never named the word crick, especially as she came out with it before Althea. It was a little touch of rheumatism, I believe, owing to standing in a draught while talking to John Twiddy; and it has gone quite away—quite away."

"When did you feel it first?"

"About ten days ago. And I did not feel it at all, more than six or seven times. It was

just touch and go. There was nothing in it."

"And did you carry Mrs. Althea across the room?"

"Oh, my goodness, yes. Where did you get hold of that? Althea told you, I suppose. It did me no harm. She's as light as a feather, and I'm as strong as a horse."

"Still it did not show your sister's usual thoughtfulness to ask you—"

"She ask me? Surely you know her too well to suspect her of that! No, no; there was no asking in the case. I caught her up, before she could say Jack Robinson. It was only a bit of fun. You know I'm rather frisky sometimes; and I was so just then."

"Ha!—She didn't ask you?"

"No."

"And you feel quite well?"

"Quite."

"Well, I hope you are speaking sincerely; for you well know, my dear Mrs. Kitty, that your life and health are highly valuable to us all, not only on Mrs. Althea's account, but your own."

"George! you're very kind!" And Mrs. Kitty blew her nose very loudly, to disperse some tears that suddenly sprang into her eyes.

"Not at all," said George warmly. "Come, don't get out of sight, I shall think you are using some of Mrs. Brand's rouge-pots."

"Fie, George! that fine colour is all her own."

"Fine colour? High colour, if you will. A very heated complexion. You are ten times better looking than she is, Mrs. Kitty, to my mind."

"George, no soft nonsense."

"You look just like the damsel in Pinelli's 'Serenata,' looking out of that little casement. However, I must not play the cavalier any longer, my dear Mrs. Kitty; so adieu!"

Mrs. Althea was wakened from her nap by the abrupt entrance of Mrs. Brand.

"Well," cried she with a malicious air of triumph, "I've found lodgings at last,—no, a cottage! I may be obliged to let part of it myself, if I find it puzzling to make both ends meet. Rhododendron Cottage!"

"Where on earth is that?" said Mrs. Althea, rubbing her eyes.

"On Collington common. Such a lovely view! Always something to see. On the direct road from one market-town to another. Excellent water, fine air, nice garden, two sitting-rooms, four bedrooms, and offices!"

"It must be a new erection," cried Kitty, who had just entered.

"Ah, I thought I should puzzle you," said Mrs. Brand, laughing. "It's Mr. Knight's."

"Mr. Knight's! But, is he going to leave?"

"I never heard his house called Rhododendron Cottage," said Mrs. Althea.

"That's my idea," said Mrs. Brand. "There is a fine rhododendron in the front garden; and one must have an address to give one's friends at a distance. 'Mrs. Brand, Collington,' would not be enough of a direction at first, though it sounds pretty enough. 'Mrs. Brand, Mr. Knight's Cottage,' would be horrid; and quite inaccurate when Mr. Knight no longer rented it."

"True; John Briggs's cottage would be the truer denomination," said Mrs. Althea, "for he built it and owns it."

"Well, whoever built it and owns it," said Mrs. Brand, "it is going to be 'Rhododendron Cottage,' henceforth. I think it sounds well enough, hey, Kate? Better, and less hackneyed than 'Rose Cottage,' or 'Myrtle Cottage'?"

"Much," said Kitty. "I don't remember to have ever heard of a 'Rhododendron Cottage' before."

"But how came you to hear of Mr. Knight's going away?" said Mrs. Althea, with a great increase of cordiality in her tone. "Surely, you did not know it when you went out this morning?"

"I did not; but I called at the baker's on pretence of eating a bun, and he told me there was a report that Mr. Knight was going or likely to go. So, on that, I stepped out. And

it *is* a good step. Mr. Knight happened to be at home, so I was able to get at the truth at once. He *is* going: he does not find the Collington practice equal his expectations. Mr. Mildmay undermines him everywhere."

"Undermines!"

"So *he* says. It is his word, not mine. He means to try for better luck elsewhere. He showed me over the cottage. It is small, of course; and the furniture, which is his own, is poor, and somewhat scanty. Altogether, it wants a lady's eye. But, when *my* furniture, which is really handsome, is put into it, and a few cheap alterations made, which can be better done when I am in the house than out of it, it will look quite a different place."

"Undoubtedly it will," said Mrs. Althea, "and the improvements will be a nice amusement for you."

"By the bye, dear Althea, how are you? You were complaining, when I went out."

"Much better, thank you."

"Much better for my having found lodgings, hey?" said Mrs. Brand mischievously. "'Welcome the coming, speed the parting guest.' Old proverbs are very rude sometimes."

"I have had a nice nap while you were out," said Mrs. Althea. "It made amends for my bad night. And when is Mr. Knight thinking of leaving? At Christmas, I suppose."

"Well, I am not quite so sure about that,"

said Mrs. Brand. "We shall see. I must run off now, and change my dress for dinner."

And she left poor Mrs. Althea with a lengthened face, and an inward ejaculation, as she uneasily turned on her sofa. "Ah, she won't go now, it's my opinion. We shall see. Many a slip 'tween cup and lip. Too good news to be true!"

CHAPTER XXV.

The same continued.

Not stayed state, but feeble stay,
Not costly robes, but poor array,
Not passed wealth, but present want,
Not heaped store, but slender scant,
Not wish at will, but weary woe,
Doth truly try the friend from foe.

Paradise of Dainty Devices.

MRS. Brand, returning from her toilette, found Mrs. Althea alone; and sitting down beside her, began with—

“ That dear good Kate has been thoughtful for me in my absence. She has nailed a list all round my window to keep out the draught. I cannot but love her for her kindness; though, between ourselves, do you know I think an airy bedroom essential to health.”

“ Airy, not draughty,” said Mrs. Althea.

“ Exactly what Mr. Mildmay said—by the bye, I forgot to mention, that I met him on the Collington road. I was talking to him about lodgs. No, that wasn’t quite it neither. I forget

exactly how it was. But I remember we were talking about the distinction between draughty and airy; and agreeing that an airy bedroom was essential to health. Mr. Knight's bedrooms are very airy. But as I was walking along, it occurred to me to wonder how Kate could keep her health, sleeping as she does in that small closet without a chimney; for you know, Althea, a Canary bird, hung within the curtains of a bed, will die before morning; and it seems to me to account for her having grown pale."

"Pale!" ejaculated Mrs. Althea, "I think Kitty remarkably fresh-looking."

"Oh, my dear Althea! *Was* fresh-looking, I grant you! But you, who see her so constantly, don't note those changes which strike a stranger."

"You think her pale?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Paler, I don't say pale. Look at her beside me, the next time she comes in."

Mrs. Althea, who knew that Mrs. Kitty's florid face would be pale beside Mrs. Brand's rubicund countenance, said nothing, but yet was disquieted.

"Kate," resumed Mrs. Brand, "has not, I understand, always slept in that room?"

"She slept there some time before my illness," said Mrs. Althea, "thinking it more companionable for us to be together, after a fright we had of thieves one night; the stairs

had tried me, and prevented my sleeping up-stairs, long before I was regularly invalided."

"That was a pity," said Mrs. Brand, "because I consider the room I occupy the best in the house; and it would have suited you, who like—who *ought* to have the best of everything. And adjoining it is a nice airy room that would have suited Kate very well."

"That room, however, is exactly the size of the one you term a closet," said Mrs. Althea.

"My dear soul, it has a *chimney*. And so great is my interest in dear Kate, that, if she would consent to change rooms with me, which I am sure she would not, I would gladly, for her sake, sleep in the closet."

"You might both sleep up-stairs without any change on your part being needed," said Mrs. Althea.

"What, and leave *you* down-stairs all by yourself?" cried Mrs. Brand. "My dear creature. But here she comes! Mum!"

And with one of her mysteriously intelligent looks to Mrs. Althea, she changed the subject immediately on Mrs. Kitty's entrance. Mrs. Althea, however, was not to be made a party against her own sister. She had always been accustomed to speak to Kitty with the utmost frankness; and fancying on her entrance, that she really looked paler than usual, she brooded on the subject till a pause in the flow of Mrs. Brand's chat gave her an opportunity of in-

troducing it, and then quietly though anxiously spoke of it to her sister.

Kitty was quite taken by surprise, and disposed to laugh at the idea of the room being close; then provoked at the suggestion, and ready to cry at its being seriously pursued. But Mrs. Brand, though not the ostensible leader, followed it up so warmly and pertinaciously, and Mrs. Althea's nerves were now so tremulous at the idea that Kitty should suffer any injury through her, that it ended in Mrs. Kitty's consenting, with tears in her eyes, to sleep away from Mrs. Althea for a few nights, by way of experiment; on condition that Hannah, for whose health Mrs. Brand seemed to entertain no fears, should occupy the closet.

"What whims! and what changes!" muttered old Hannah to herself, as she tumbled her feather-bed down-stairs. "It's all that Mrs. Brand's doings, *I* knows—Mrs. Firebrand I thinks she ought to be called. And if Mrs. Althea is took ill in the night, *I* knows whose doing it'll have been, that *I* does!"

Oh, what a sleepless night it was, to both the sisters! For Mrs. Kitty, in spite of its being her dear Eliza's doing, felt some uneasiness in forsaking Mrs. Althea. Besides, she really was not half so comfortable as in the room to which she had been accustomed; it felt damp, and there was a tremendous draught down the chimney, which kept her feet cold all night.

"I'll have a chimney-board put up to-morrow," thought she. "That's flat!"

In the morning, Mrs. Brand kept up such an unceasing flow of small-talk about her lodgings, her furniture, and her own affairs in general, that she gave the sisters no opportunity of comparing notes on their respective discomforts; and as no considerable harm seemed to have ensued, the sisters magnanimously resolved to be silent martyrs. It cheered Mrs. Althea wonderfully to repeat to herself, "It will not be for long."

"Pray," cried Mrs. Brand, pausing suddenly in the act of helping herself to a second egg, "did it ever occur to you, Althea, to consult Mr. Knight?"

"Dear me, no," said Mrs. Althea.

"Forest and Mildmay have the best practice, all the country round," cried Mrs. Kitty.

"Ah well! how they got it is best known to themselves," said Mrs. Brand, carelessly. "For my own part, if anything were the matter with me, I've a notion I should try Mr. Knight."

"He may be clever, but his looks are certainly against him," said Mrs. Kitty.

"I have never seen him, and never wish to see him," said Mrs. Althea; "but I understand he's not liked."

"I think people are too fastidious," said Mrs. Brand. "To me, his manner was particularly pleasant."

"I am quite content with my present advisers," said Mrs. Althea, with a decision that set the matter at rest.

Immediately after breakfast, Mrs. Brand started off to pay a second visit to Rhododendron Cottage, after vainly endeavouring to persuade Mrs. Kitty to go with her. But Mrs. Kitty had her farming concerns to attend to, and said she must postpone the pleasure. Mrs. Althea was presently left to her own devices; and commenced with a great fit of yawning, partly from weakness, and partly from want of sleep. Then she read the Psalms and Lessons for the day, and Jay's Morning Portion, and tried to meditate upon them, but found she could not. She was continually recurring to the words, "I wonder if she will go!"

At length she took up her knitting; and before she had knitted many rows, George Mildmay came in. After professional inquiries, "Well," said he, "I was at Bever Hollow yesterday, but to no good. Stay, it was to some good, too; they behaved very handsomely."

And out came his list, with several recent additions to it, which afforded a subject of interest to Mrs. Althea for some time. At length she said, "So you had a little chat with Mrs. Brand yesterday?"

"Yes! what, the woman could not help blabbing, then, though she bound me to secrecy! What did she say?"

"Nothing particular, except that she had found that Mr. Knight was likely to go away, and had thereupon applied for his cottage, and that you had warned her against unventilated bedrooms, and made a distinction between airy rooms and draughty ones."

"That woman! Did she say *I* said that? 'Twas she herself! and with reference to Mrs. Kitty's room."

"Aye?"

"Fact, ma'am. What a twister and perverter of the truth in little things she is! She's dangerous! Every one is, that deviates in small things from the truth; for 'he that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little.' Unfortunately, they make their neighbours fall too. Well, did she get the cottage? She had not seen it when we met."

"I am afraid of being too secure. At first it seemed as though she had taken it; but Mr. Knight is disinclined to give it up at Christmas, and—we don't want her here. But, George, you were afraid she had let out some secret. Come, what was it?"

"The secret was of her own making, though I willingly consented to keep it, because there was no good in worrying you about nothing. She fancied Mrs. Kitty was not quite well—"

"*Is* she quite well, George? Don't deceive me, I entreat you!"

"Right as possible, ma'am. Here she is to speak for herself. Hallo, Mrs. Kitty, your eyes are inflamed. You have caught cold, chatting to young fellows out of open windows."

"Oh no, 'twasn't that," said Mrs. Kitty, "last night was so very cold."

"And she changed her bedroom," said Mrs. Althea anxiously, "without having a fire lighted in it first."

"That's Mrs. Brand's doing, I know; you need not tell me," said George, looking full at Mrs. Kitty, who felt a little embarrassed.

"Well, she meant it all for the best," said Mrs. Kitty, "and the worst is over now. I've put up a chimney-board."

"Much good the chimney will do you, then," said he, smiling.

Mrs. Kitty, having only come in for the keys, speedily returned to her own affairs.

Almost immediately afterwards Rhoda came in, much to the pleasure of Mrs. Althea, who had not seen her for some time. The cold air had given her a bright colour, but it was considerably heightened on her seeing George Mildmay; and she seemed so embarrassed by his presence, that he saw it, and, smiling, soon took his leave.

"A long time has passed since I saw you last," said Mrs. Althea.

"Oh, too long, a great deal," said Rhoda,

eagerly ; " and I have so much to say, I hardly know where to begin."

" In the first place," said Mrs. Althea, willing to give her time to compose herself, " I have to thank you for procuring me the loan of Paul Sandby's etchings."

" Oh, did you like them ? I felt sure you would. It was Mr. Glyn you should thank, not me. He is so very kind—"

" Is he ? I have seen so little of him, that I am glad to hear it from one who knows him better than I do." Rhoda's cheeks again burned. " How sorry I was," pursued Mrs. Althea, " to hear of your sad accident. Do tell me all about it ; I have only had George Mildmay's account."

" Oh, my hands are quite well now. See, they are very little scarred. Mr. Glyn has made more of it than there was any occasion for, and called every day almost, every day but two, to inquire about them ; and, you see, dear Mrs. Althea, that, not knowing the ways of the house, he could not guess that this would be ill taken, and in fact, quite mistaken, quite a wrong construction put upon it ; and that what he meant for kindness and politeness, and all that, and intended should give me pleasure, only gave me pain ; or, at any rate, got me into so much trouble, as very much to damp the pleasure."

" How was that ? "

"I hardly know how to tell you, and yet I came here this morning for nothing else. I thought you would tell me what to do. Everybody seems to apply to you in their difficulties, and I am placed in such a very trying position, that I thought I would apply to you in mine. I had a sleepless, uncomfortable night;" and her eyes filled with tears.

"I think I can save you the telling of part of your story," said Mrs. Althea, gently; "your cousins would sooner have had Mr. Glyn's visits paid to them than to you."

"Just so, dear Mrs. Althea. And they need not have taken it up in that way, because his visits were in fact to my uncle. He came over to play chess with *him*; and then, just because he had happened to be by when the accident occurred, the sight of me put it into his head to ask me how I was, and to say kind and flattering things that the occasion really did not call for; and my cousins thought them quite out of place, and thought *me* out of place too, and said I put myself too forward, and other unpleasant things of the kind. So that, at last, I almost came to the resolution of keeping my room all the mornings; but then, again, I thought, why should I?"

"Why should you, indeed?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Because it would have been very dull, you know, for a constancy; and besides, why should

I, because I was unjustly suspected, deprive myself voluntarily of the pleasantest society that came to the house? I felt Mr. Glyn did not like me better than any one else; and, if he *did*, could I help it?" cried Rhoda, with eyes flashing with such injured innocence, that Mrs. Althea could not help laughing.

"Go on, my dear," said she, sympathising, "you could not."

"So I continued to go on as usual," pursued Rhoda, stoutly, "neither putting myself forward, nor absenting myself from the morning room. I was pretty much sent to Coventry; but when Mr. Glyn came, he talked nicely to us all, especially to my uncle and me, quite superior conversation, Mrs. Althea, to what I have been accustomed to hear, and when he was gone, I had something to think over that made the time pass pleasantly. However, I could not escape giving offence, do what I would; and, one unlucky day, I was being very severely reprimanded, so that I could not help crying, when Mr. Glyn suddenly came in, and heard and saw something of what was going on, before we were well aware of his presence. From that moment, I think, he adopted a new line of conduct; he paid me attentions that none could overlook; and though I really believe he began to do so for the sake of punishing Anna and Charlotte, which was not a very good motive, you know, still, I could

not be quite sure that was all. He seemed to become more earnest, more real ; and, as it was impossible not to like him very much, it became a question of anxious interest to me, whether he were trifling with me or not—”

Her voice faltered, and she stopped.

“ Well might it become so,” said Mrs. Althea feelingly. “ I should think him a man of too much honour to carry it so far, if he meant nothing serious.”

“ Well, it seemed so to me,” resumed Rhoda. “ I am sure I lay awake many a night, thinking it over. And then, another thing hampered me. If he *were* serious, how was I to act? If I really felt that he could make me very happy, and he felt that I could make him so, was I to repel him simply because my cousins envied me his preference ? ”

“ Certainly not,” said Mrs. Althea, with decision. “ Even had their feelings been more amiable, there was no call on you for this sacrifice. Your repelling him would not make him like either of them.”

“ So I thought,” said Rhoda ; “ and I am very glad to have you confirm me in it. But still it depended on an *if*. If he ~~were~~ not serious, I might be doing myself a great injury and making myself very ridiculous by thinking him so. But *others* thought so too ; and yesterday evening my uncle, who, good, simple-

hearted man, might live in a house full of engaged people without ever finding it out, noticed something that was said to me, and taking it much more in jest than was meant, rallied me on my ‘conquest,’ and ‘only wished it might be one;’ which made matters so much worse, that I had a hearty cry about it in my own room, and thought I could not bear it any longer. I wished mamma were alive, and felt what it was to be an orphan; and then I remembered you, dear Mrs. Althea, and thought I would come and tell you my griefs like Pamela Bohun, if you would let me.”

There was something so confiding and artless in the young girl’s manner, that Mrs. Althea was quite touched by it.

“My dear,” began she, taking Rhoda’s hand, “I know so little of Mr. Glyn—”

“Stay a moment, you have not heard all by any means,” said Rhoda, blushing. “This morning, my uncle and cousins were going to ride to Maylands; and Charlotte said something tart about my having the opportunity of a fine *tête-à-tête*. I told her I meant to spend the morning with you, which seemed to please her, and she expressed her approval. I started before they did, that they might see me actually off. I had just reached the bleacher’s field, when Mr. Glyn came up with me, walking. You know it was not the road from his house to ours, so that I could not have expected him,

nor be accused of waylaying him. He asked me whether I were coming to see you ; I said yes ; and having said that, you know I could not turn back, nor hinder him from going the same way."

" Why should you ? " said Mrs. Althea.

" I don't know," said Rhoda, looking distressed, and faltering ; " but he never let the conversation drop for a moment, and at last supported it all himself, for I could not get out a word ; and at length he said—oh ! I cannot tell you what he said ; " and she hid her burning face in her hands.

" There's no need," said Mrs. Althea.

" Just then," said Rhoda, " who should ride past us but Mr. Mildmay ! He must have seen us before him ever so long, but I was so pre-occupied, so agitated, I never heard him coming. My face was burning, just as it is now ; and looking up, rather startled, to see who was passing us, I met his eye ; oh, such a mischievous look ! he bowed, and rode on. After that, I could not—"

At this moment, in sailed Mrs. Brand, freshly dressed for dinner, in new ribbons and mitts, not a pin out of place, and with a little bit of fancy-work in her hand. She bowed with great ceremony to Rhoda, looked at her acutely, and seated herself with the air of " Here I shall plant myself."

Rhoda gave Mrs. Althea an expressive glance

rose up and kissed her. "I have been paying an unconscionable visit," said she; "good bye." And Mrs. Althea made no effort to detain her.

Mrs. Brand, with officious civility, insisted on seeing her to the door and opening it for her. Having closed it, she returned to her post, and with a meaning, half contemptuous smile, observed,

"That young lady's secret is easily found out."

"I never try to find out secrets," said Mrs. Althea (who, just then, certainly forgot Pamela); "It does not seem to me very honourable."

"Ah, few people are as good as you," said Mrs. Brand; "Most of us love to hear a secret, and to tell it too. Mr. Mildmay, for example. I found Mr. Knight quite in a rage about it."

"About what?"

"About the report of his intention to leave Collington having spread. He said he had never breathed a syllable of it but to me; I, you know, had only mentioned it to you and to Mr. Mildmay, whom I concluded, from his professional habits, it might be safely entrusted to. Instead of which, Mr. Knight going his rounds this morning, finds every one speaking to him about it; and, on coming home, ever so many tradesmen's bills sent in before Christmas, just as if he were going to run away. The consequence is, he is, naturally, very much offended, and says he must, for his credit's sake, stay over quarter-day, if it be only till the next half-

quarter : which inconveniences me, of course, so that I, too, owe Mr. Mildmay a grudge."

" Oh, you must stay here till the half-quarter," said Kitty, who had entered in the midst of the story.

" Rely on it, George Mildmay has spread no reports," said Mrs. Althea. " Why, you yourself heard it from the baker, who, of course, may have told others."

Mrs. Brand, for once, had nothing to reply.

Mrs. Kitty took up a newspaper. " Dear me, there's going to be a grand cattle-show in London," said she. " How I should like to see it!"

" Why should not you run up to town, then ? " cried Mrs. Brand. " The change would do you good ; and I could take care of Althea."

Mrs. Althea's heart stopped beating ; and then went on with a thump.

" That would be a pretty business," said Mrs. Kitty ; " No, thank you, not I." Mrs. Althea's heart beat more quietly.

" Dear me," resumed Kitty, in a wondering sort of voice, " what a time it is since I was in London, to be sure ! years and years ! Gigot sleeves were worn then."

" What frights they were ! " said Mrs. Brand. " I always regret having been painted in them. By the bye, it is stupid to have one's own picture. I think I shall give it to you, Kate for I am sure no one will value it more."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Mrs. Kitty. But where shall I hang it?" looking round.

"There's no room there, Kitty," said Mrs. Althea, following her sister's eye.

"It is just the size of that," said Mrs. Brand, pointing to a three-quarter portrait immediately facing Mrs. Althea.

"Oh, I can't take down my father's picture, even for yours, Eliza," said Mrs. Kitty. "I will hang it over my bedroom mantel-piece, and then I shall see it continually."

"That wall is damp, and will continue so, as you don't have a fire," said Mrs. Brand: "I observed, to-day, that the paper is peeling off. No; without vanity, I think I may say my picture is too good for an attic, and it will save me a chimney-glass; so I will keep it till you have a more respectable place for it. People will only take it for my younger sister."

"I rather believe," she resumed presently, "I shall be obliged to run home before I close with Mr. Knight, to see about various little matters. Will you go with me, Kate?"

"How can I?" said Mrs. Kitty. "Just consider!"

"Well, I thought Althea might be willing to part with you for a few days, as she is pretty easy now," said Mrs. Brand. "I'm sorry you decline. It would have given you a little change."

Taking Kitty's hand, the next time they

were left together, Mrs. Althea wistfully said —

“ Dear Kitty, Christmas is near ; and all who can, should have a happy Christmas. Why should not you, as Mrs. Brand proposes, run up to town for a few days ? Pamela Bohun will soon be home, and would, I am sure, gladly come and take care of me. You could not leave me under better auspices.”

“ You must be mad, Althea ! ” cried Mrs. Kitty. “ I go to London indeed ! As well go to Jericho, while I’m about it ! What have I got to do in London, or what has London to do with me ? Stuff and nonsense ! You’d wish me back before I had been gone half an hour ; and I’m sure I should be wishing myself back too. No, no ; London is all very well for those that keep their carriages, and don’t care how they pay their bills ; but it’s no place for me, and I’m not going to budge.”

Mrs. Althea felt immensely relieved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

Merry Christmas.

Now Christmas is come,
Let us beat up the drum,
And call all our neighbours together.

Old Song.

HOW joyous was the approach of Christmas to Pamela! She was going home, and preparing various little gifts for all whom she loved; a pretty knitted shawl for her mother, a warm little rug for her father's feet in the pulpit; smart neck-ties for her sisters, and warm, *bought* gloves for her brothers, who being much accustomed to home manufactures, set an extraordinary value on anything that came from a shop. Then she had to fabricate ingenious inexpensive prizes for her little pupils after they had gone to bed; often humming some old carol or chant over her work. Then came her turn to receive presents too—Mrs. Glyn gave her, oh! grandeur! a violet and black checked silk dress; Adela

and Mab gave her a worked collar and cuffs ; and, to crown all, Mr. Glyn, who had been quite animated and pleasant of late, opened the following dialogue on the evening of the first day his mother came down-stairs, when they had all dined together in honour of the event, and were sitting sociably round the fire.

“ Miss Bohun, monetary transactions are dreadful things ; but as your attentions to my little pets are not quite gratuitous, may I, without offence, propose a little settlement between us before we part ? ”

“ Oh ! thank you, sir ! ” said Pamela with undisguised pleasure.

“ Here then,” said he, smiling ; and holding something towards her.

Pamela gratefully received it. “ But this is twice too much ! ” said she hastily.

“ Why, you don’t suppose I make half-quarters, do you ? ” said he. “ No, no, let us hear no more of it—enough said ! Well, mamma, did Forest tell you the news to-day ? ”

Pamela sat blissfully revolving various extravagances for the morrow. Here were fifteen golden sovereigns . she boldly resolved to spend five. Yes, she would buy a bonnet for her mother, cloth and fringe for mantles for her sisters, pictures and story-books for the young ones, and Southey’s Doctor in one double-column volume for her father. All which, being a good bargainer, she achieved. When

she showed her purchases to Mrs. Glyn, the old lady was surprised—surprised at the eligible investments, and surprised that Pamela had not laid out a penny on herself. Pamela laughed and looked bright: that was not her way of enjoying the spending of money. Mrs. Glyn thought girls of her sort ought to be encouraged: she desired her own maid to assist in cutting out the mantles; so that with her assistance, Pamela's swift little needle sped through its task at over-hours, and accomplished it, just before it was time to pack up for home. She showed her work, with girlish satisfaction, to Mrs. Glyn; and that lady, after much commendation, testified her approval by the donation of an amethyst brooch, that might, perhaps, have cost three guineas, and was to all intents and purposes as good as new.

At breakfast-time the next morning Pamela, to her surprise, found that Mr. and Mrs. Glyn and the little girls were going to start for Brighton, immediately after Christmas-day. To Brighton! such an immense distance! All settled after her going to bed, the previous evening? Yes; it seemed one of the privileges of wealth to take no anxious thought about such movements, but to fly about from place to place as freely as a bird flies from spray to spray. The Hills were going too! Then Pamela would lose the pleasure she had promised herself, of some long walks and talks with

Rhoda during the holidays. Change of scene was very delightful, doubtless, to those who liked it and felt in want of it: for her part, if so much money were to be spent by her in enjoyment, she would rather have spent it in the summer time than at Christmas, when the days were short, the trees leafless, and influenza lying in wait for victims in every draughty house and damp bed. She would rather spend the genial season among the poor people she knew, and could exchange merry looks and kind words with; rather see her own church decked with ivy and holly than any other; rather sit by her own fire-side than a strange one. Our privileges are equalized a good deal, after all!

And oh! what a happy meeting that was, when she reached home, and was locked in the arms of her fond father and mother, and kissing her sisters and brothers! Every one seemed inclined, at first, to talk at once; and when this tendency was subdued, the interlocutors still spoke very fast, and looked very eager, and laughed very often. Laughter of the heart!

The Squire's Christmas hamper, too, had arrived, running over with good things; and Mrs. Glyn had sent a ham and turkey; and farmer Boates had brought rabbits, and widow Norland had killed them a fat goose; there was no end to the good cheer. Full ^{widow} ~~had~~ stories without end to tell of Oxford; but this was

no time for them, they must be kept for the evening semi-circle round the fire. Prue and Patty had decked the parlour with holly, and Hugh had taken care to tie a piece of mistletoe to the beam across the ceiling. Pamela's presents were produced, and never were presents so admired, extolled, and valued. She poured her ten bright sovereigns into her mother's lap. Danae's shower of gold was insignificant in comparison! Pamela was happy as happy could be; yet as she flew about the house, it seemed to her so much smaller, colder, and scantily furnished than formerly. But if the draughts, thin and few carpets and scanty curtains kept the house cold, there was enough of family affection in it to make it warm and genial as heart could wish.

"Well" cried Mr. Bohun, sitting down in his warm corner:—

"No glory I covet, no riches I want,
Ambition is nothing to me,"

as long as I have my old helpmate and my dear lads and lasses all about me, doing well and looking well. Mr. Glyn may run away from his home at Christmas time, if he likes it."

"Mr. Glyn is a very nice man, though, papa, in many respects," said Pamela, twining her arm within his.

"Is he so, missy? And in what does his nicety chiefly consist?"

" Niceness, not nicety, papa, please! Nicety is his fault, niceness his merit. He has been very generous this hard winter to the poor—"

" I know he has, my dear; they bless him for it."

" And he really is very fond of his mother, though he shows it in an odd way. Very fond of his little girls, and kind to them, without spoiling them. Very considerate and polite to me. Kind, in a grand, lordly sort of way, to his servants and dependents in general."

" Why, then, he's all one could wish," said Giles, who was roasting chestnuts.

" No, that's not a sequitur," said Mr. Bohun.

" Very good as far as it goes, and perhaps Pamela may in the end make him out what you say, though she has not done so yet."

" Is he a religious man, my dear?" said her mother.

" Well, no—and yet yes," said Pamela, hesitating; " his is not surface religion, you know."

" Much good it would be of, if it were," said Fulk, filling a nutshell into the fire.

" I mean, it does not appear much on the surface; but I think, at least I hope it lies underneath."

" Pleasant? no stuff about him?", inquired Hugh tersely.

" Pleasant, *very*; especially lately."

" Why, especially lately?" said her father.

"Well, papa, it may be only my fancy, but I have sometimes thought he must be in love."

"That does not always make men pleasant," said Fulk. "Sometimes they turn desperately egotistical and vapid."

"It has had quite a different effect on Mr. Glyn," said Pamela. "Supposing I am in the right, you know, in my fancy. He has seemed in good humour with everybody."

"What should have made him otherwise before?" asked Hugh.

"He was not cross, only indifferent," said Pamela. "In want of an object, I think."

"And whom is he in love with?" asked Prudence, eagerly.

"Pamela, of course," said Ralph, looking very roguish.

"That's just it, master Witty-pate," said she laughing and pinching his ear. "You have hit it exactly, so I must tell you no more."

"Come, Pamela, tell *me*," said Patience imploringly.

"Ah, I dare say. Why don't you believe Ralph?" said Pamela. "Come, Ralph! I love my love with an A because he is amiable, I hate him because he is avaricious."

"Avaricious and amiable! Oh Pamela!" cried little Charity, clapping her hands.

"I love my love, with an F, because he is funny," burst in Hugh, looking mischievously at Pamela, "I hate him because he is formi-

dable. His name is Forest, and he lives in Fordington. That's what *you* should say!—”

“ Hark ! here come the carollers,” said Pamela ; and listening, they heard the distant sound of clear young treble voices singing :—

“ Peace on earth and mercy mild,
Man with Heaven reconciled.”

“ How lovely ! ” murmured Pamela, and the young chatterers became attent and solemnised.

“ Which of you can repeat Wordsworth's pretty lines on hearing the waits playing beneath his window ? ” said Mr. Bohun.

“ I can, father,” said Fulk, and he did so.

“ When the young carollers come here, I must give them some cakes and a cup of warm beer,” said Mrs. Bohun.

“ That's poetry, mamma,” cried Geoffrey laughing.

“ It's poetry they'll like very well, Geoffrey. Perhaps their poetry may convert the warm beer into wassail bowl.”

“ Ah ! do let us have a wassail bowl, mother dear ! ” cried Hugh eagerly. “ We did once.”

“ Once ! how grand ! ” said Mr. Bohun laughing. “ These children have almost as vague ideas of wine as Avaro's steeds had of corn.”

“ Come, mamma, do ! ”

“ Nonsense, you chicks ! ”

“ Charity begins at home, mamma. You

ought to centralise your sympathies. If you give those little vagabonds warm beer, you should give your own children wassail bowl."

"It will take a whole bottle of wine," said Mrs. Bohun, hesitatingly.

"I don't believe the real old wassail was made of wine," said Mr. Bohun. "Else, why 'wine and wassail'? it would be tautology."

"Oh, father, don't broach such dreadfully niggardly opinions on Christmas-eve!" cried Fulk. "'Christmas comes but once a year.' There are but thirteen glasses in a bottle: here are your ten children, my mother and you. One glass a-piece, father, and one for manners."

"One glass a-piece, and two for papa," interrupted little Charity.

"Well put in, Caritas, alias Carrots."

"Come, Fulk, you shall get the wine," said his mother, rummaging among her keys, "Prudence shall boil the spice, and Hugh shall roast the crab-apples."

"The cook, if he lack not wisdom, shall sweetly lick his fingers,' mamma!'

"You may do as you like about that; meantime, I must go and warm the beer. Cut up the plain cake for them, Patience."

"Papa! please make a rabbit on the wall."

"Willingly. See, Roger, here is a noble rabbit! How he moves his ears! Pretty Bunny!—Ah! I see a strange shadow,—whose profile is that? Somebody coming in

Ha! Mr. Mildmay! This is neighbourly of you!"

"I just dropped in to wish you all a merry Christmas," said George. "You know, I have done so these three years. Have *you* forgotten it?" said he in a lower voice to Pamela, as he took her hand.

"Then that's why we are to have the Squire's turkey for supper," cried Mr. Bohun. "My wife was so sly, she never named you, but I'm sure she thought of you. Come, Mr. Mildmay, it will only be changing the name of your late dinner,—Turkey, sausages, mince-pies, wassail-bowl, at eight o'clock."

"Sir, I shall be most happy."

"Now, let us sit, though not upon the ground,
And tell strange stories of the deaths of kings."

"Your horse, Mr. Mildmay, must be put up."

"Sir, I have seen to his Christmas comforts already, thank you; trusting, not groundlessly, you see, that you would take me in. I wish every poor wayfarer were taken in to as good a fire and as good company this evening, and that's a large wish."

"Where shall you eat your Christmas dinner, Mr. Mildmay?"

"Will you let me eat it *here*, sir?"

"You will help us to make up a baker's dozen; but remember, thirteen is an unlucky number."

"And there's a coffin leapt out of the fire," cried Hugh.

"Nonsense," said Pamela, "it's a purse."

"As I am not superstitious about coffins or unlucky numbers," said George, "I will make bold to come, with your permission, and in time for church, looking in on Mrs. Althea by the way. Hark! here come the carollers in full force!"

And the full tide of song burst forth in front of the house—

Hark! the herald-angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King!

Christmas morning was "frosty but kindly." Mrs. Althea and Mrs. Kitty exchanged fond kisses and good wishes. Their friends had not forgotten them: their larder was full, the post brought kind letters; the parlour was adorned with Christmas greens and Christmas gifts. A reading-desk for Mrs. Althea from Rhoda; a lamp-candle for Mrs. Kitty, from George Mildmay; a pretty tea-urn for both, from Miss Rickards. Many humbler friends had the sisters gladdened in their turn. Trains of thrifty mothers and scantily clad children were seen cheerfully hastening homewards with steaming, savoury messes provided by Mrs. Kitty, or warm additions to their clothing from Mrs. Althea. Mrs. Brand called it "charming! charming!" but was persuaded her dear friends

must have spent a great deal of money, and delighted when she heard they had not.

"A merry Christmas to you, my dear Mrs. Kitty!" cried George Mildmay, looking in on his way to church. "I am glad to see you tying up the mistletoe,—of course, I shall avail myself of it."

"George, how *can* you be so stupid?" said Mrs. Kitty, shaking him off.

"Why, you look as blythe as a bridegroom, George!" said Mrs. Althea, holding out her hand. He took it, and kissed it, saying softly, as he bent over her with a smile, "Perhaps I may be one, some of these days."

Answering her quick look, he added, "I live in hope." Then turning about, "Ladies, I would have you to know it is full time to get ready for church."

"That depends upon how long we take to get ready," said Mrs. Kitty, smartly.

"Well, the bells are going."

"Not all of them, till *we* go," said Mrs. Kitty. "However, Eliza, I believe we have not much time to spare."

"Nor have I," said George, waiting, however, till they had left the room. Then, with eager subdued voice, and mantling colour, "Mrs. Althea," said he, "I have spoken. She is mine!—we are engaged!"

"How thankful I am! May Heaven's

blessing rest on you both! This will indeed make Christmas merry to me!"

" You are always finding your happiness in others! When may she come to you? She is longing for an uninterrupted hour."

" Ah, my dear friend, I seldom have an uninterrupted hour now. However, Kitty and Mrs. Brand are going to see the conjuror to-morrow; they will walk over by daylight, and take tea with a friend in the town first; so that if you and Pamela would not mind a twilight walk—"

" Oh, delightful! Of course, we should mind it very much if it were not for *your* sake, and we shall not have anything to talk about by the way, so you must coddle us and make much of us when we arrive."

" Well, I'll see what I can do. How happy her father and mother must be!"

" Well, ma'am, you forget how short the time has been for telling them yet. But the truth is, I did give dear Mrs. Bohun just one little hint beforehand, which smoothed the way for me wonderfully; and I'll answer for it she has found means, by this time, to tell her husband. Good bye, good bye!"

Mrs. Althea read the Christmas service quietly and thankfully. It was not her first solitary housekeeping on a Christmas morning; and when she thought of the brighter, healthier days, when she had "gone forth with the

multitude unto the house of God with the voice of praise and thanksgiving among such as kept holy-day," her heart did not die within her, for she was able to put her trust in Him who was the help of her countenance and her God.

True, the future looked dark; true, years of tedious confinement and increasing infirmity and weakness lay before her, unless a shorter road were unexpectedly afforded to her journey's end. And then poor Kitty would be left alone, unless she cast in her lot with Mrs. Brand.

Well, even that might be for Kitty's comfort. But Mrs. Althea would not look forward; she would confide her future to Him who had already brought her thus far safely on life's journey.

CHAPTER XXVII.

Mrs. Althea's Tea-table.

We brought our work, and came, you see,
To take a friendly cup of tea.

JANE TAYLOR. *Recreation.*

MRS. Kitty and Mrs. Brand had started to see the unparalleled and unrivalled performances of the Wizard of the West, about half an hour; and Mrs. Althea, in her best claret silk dress and French shawl, was lying in sober expectancy of waking bliss in the company of her young friends, when Pamela entered alone, glowing with health and happiness, and threw herself into her arms.

George had some patients round Collington to see before his day's business was over; but he had walked with her great part of the way, and would be sure to join them before tea; and Pamela was not sorry to have Mrs. Althea to herself for an hour in the first place, as she had much to say that could not be said in the

presence of others. First, there were her school-room experiences, which she spoke of in a very cheerful spirit: she did not dislike governessing at all; she had always been fond of children and of teaching, and it was delightful to find herself useful.

Life is real, life is earnest,
And this world is not its goal.

And then there was the joy of returning home, which she could never have had if she had not left it: of returning, crowned with home-honours, thanked by her parents as a family benefactress, revered and idolized by her younger brothers and sisters, and with the consciousness of having given satisfaction to her employers. All this would have made up an enviable amount of felicity, even if—

Pamela blushed as she approached the subject of her engagement. It appeared, that there had been of old a kind of boy and girl attachment between George and herself. On his side it had seemed to die out, at any rate had been lost sight of, in the busy scenes of life; while hers had still existed, in so far as to make her feel there was no one she had ever seen whom she liked so much, or who was so calculated to make her happy. But Pamela's upright and earnest nature was not one to expend itself in hopeless longings or vain despairs; she had firmly closed the door against the subject under any guise, as much as in her lay; and it is

surprising how our efforts of this kind are seconded, if we make them with a will. Still, the foe, though bound hand and foot, starved out, and asleep, was *alive*: it needed but to loose his bonds, rouse him, and give him food, to make him rise up in renewed vigour. And therefore, when Pamela found that George Mildmay, if he had not loved her all this while, yet had loved her long, loved her now and loved her much, she could return his affection with all the purity and fervour of her heart.

Long before the old and young friend had exhausted all they had to say, George joined them. The fire was bright, the shutters closed, and the curtains drawn; but there was only the cheerful fire-light, though the new and pretty lamp stood in the centre of the table that Mrs. Kitty had generously covered for her sister's guests with numerous varieties of cake and bread, delicate slices of ham and turkey, and glass saucers of sweetmeats and honey. A gay urn-rug, worked by Miss Rickards, awaited the new urn that had superseded the bright little brass kettle. As soon as George entered, Hannah proudly brought in the urn, loudly hissing and throwing up a prodigious column of steam, and planted it with a mighty and ostentatious effort on the table. Pamela immediately prepared to do the honours; but George begged that the lamp might not be immediately lighted, the fire-light was so pleasant.

He looked beaming with love, good faith, and every honest and manly feeling and affection; notwithstanding which, there was a little frown on his brow, slight as a summer cloud. Both his companions observed it, and he was not one to keep its origin long concealed.

"That Mrs. Brand of yours," he presently began, "what a toad she is!—First, she meets me on the Queen's highway, detains me from my lawful affairs by ever so much gammon, and ends by telling me Mr. Knight is going away; but begs me to keep it a dead secret. Of course I do; of course she doesn't, but blabs it to one and another, putting each under the same restriction of secrecy, which of course only makes every one the readier to whisper it. What's the consequence? The tradesmen think Mr. Knight is going to abscond before Christmas, and send in their bills; he, naturally wrathy, complains to Mrs. Brand; she puts it off upon me, confessing that she let it out in my presence, but no other. Let it out, indeed!—I met Knight just now, who looked as black as Le Noir Fainéant; so without any ceremony, I said, 'Mr. Knight, I find there is an uncomfortable impression afloat that I have told people you are going away. I had it from Mrs. Brand; but, I assure you, I mentioned it to no living creature but Mrs. Althea Hall, who was safe to hear it from Mrs. Brand, if not from me.' Would not you have expected this to mollify

the fellow? But no, I could see he still owed me a grudge; and though he said a few civil words that meant nothing, he spoilt them by adding, that it might as well have been told the town crier as to you; for that you received and entertained the whole county! This nettled me, I confess; and 'Mr. Knight,' said I, 'if you mean, by entertaining the county, that the lady in question entertains the best of our county families by retailing small local news, I can assure you, you never were more mistaken. No one is less indebted to petty scandals for her power of entertaining her friends, and instructing them, too, than Mrs. Althea:—and so, sir, as I believe I am keeping you from your dinner, I have the pleasure of wishing you good evening!"'

"Well done!" said Pamela, approvingly.

"George," said Mrs. Althea, amused, "you had better leave me to fight my own battles; which will, perhaps, end in my having no battles at all. Mr. Knight may say and think what he likes of me and the county; but it will do me no harm with any one who knows me; and I shall not hear what he says. But nothing would annoy me more than that you should embroil yourself with him, and make him your active enemy, which will hurt you more than him, as he is certainly going away, and may leave a sting behind him."

"A clear stage and no favour, ma'am, is all I desire. Don't let us waste our time by

talking or thinking any more on so disagreeable a subject. I thought, to be sure, it would be nice to divide the business with Forest, and take the outlying districts including Collington, which are more fatiguing to Forest than to a light young fellow like me; and Knight's small leavings and his cottage seemed desirable, especially under present circumstances; but we'll find another, won't we, Pamela? "

"Another and a better," said Pamela. "I never was so particularly fond of Mr. Knight's cottage; the walls are so bare, so straight and uninteresting."

"It would be anything but uninteresting to me," said George, "if you were its mistress and I its master."

"Ah, that would make a grand difference, no doubt," said Pamela, laughing. "We can well wait for something better."

"Wait till a house is built? My dearest Pamela!—"

"Well, it will be something to look forward to, and to watch in progress."

"Oh, that will never do."

"I'm afraid it would be too expensive," said Pamela, wistfully. "It must cost a great deal to build a house, even a little one. What a pity we can't build one ourselves!"

"Just put in a brick or two when the humour suits us, hey? And get the boys to help us for a frolic, on half-holidays. Or this way:—

Suppose my laying a' wager with somebody—Mr. Glyn, for instance—that I'd build my own house! Then, you know, there would be no shame in doing it. You should carry the trowel and I the hod. Oh, delightful!"

"Ah, something will turn up for us, some of these days—"

"Can't you fancy me, splashing about the lime and water, or doing a neat little bit of masonry?"

"Oh, exactly!"

"If we could even get a house in the shell—"

"With you for the snail? No, that would not do."

"I'm no snail! It's *you* are the snail, all for procrastinating."

"Procrastination is not my nature, is it, Mrs. Althea? But there is no good in doing things in a hurry; and some things cannot and will not be done in a hurry. Now, for instance, my engagement to Mr. Glyn cannot be given up at the first word—"

"What! not for an engagement to Mr. Mildmay?"

"I've a notion," said Mrs. Althea, "that Mr. Glyn has an engagement of his own in view—if it be not made already—that may make him wonderfully lenient towards you."

"Have you found that out?" said Pamela, smiling, and colouring a little.

"Why, I all but know it. Rhoda had all but told me, when Mrs. Brand came in."

"Ah, that Mrs. Brand!" groaned George. "Pamela! why did you blush when you spoke of Mr. Glyn's engagement?"

"Did I? I don't know—"

"Come; I shall be jealous!"

"I suppose it was because I felt a little ashamed—"

"Of what, pray?"

"Of being sharp-sighted on the subject. And I may be mistaken yet."

"Oh, I think you are not," said Mrs. Althea. "Rhoda's communications made the matter pretty certain."

"What a nice thing for her! She does not seem very well placed in her present home, and Mr. Glyn can offer her such a nice one!"

"If I had known he had been pre-occupied in that quarter," said George, drawing a deep breath, "it would have saved me some sleepless nights."

"Oh, Mr. Mildmay, how could you be so stupid as to be afraid of him?"

"*Mr. Mildmay?*"

"George, then," softly, and hesitating a little, with a pretty heightening of colour.

"How could I be so stupid?" repeated he absently, and much more occupied in looking at her than in thinking of what he said. "Well,

I am sure there was plenty to be afraid of—prosperity, personality, propinquity."

"Dear Mr. Mildmay, the propinquity between the master of the house and the governess is nothing!"

"Ought to be nothing, at any rate," said Mrs. Althea.

"And *can* be nothing, in a well-regulated family like Mr. Glyn's," said Pamela. "We were pleasant and polite to each other; but should never have been anything more, if we had lived to the age of Methuselah."

George burst out laughing.

"Something short of the age of that venerated gentleman," said he, "I should have thought you tolerably safe."

"In the event of this alliance taking place," said Pamela, "I dare say they will not want a governess."

"My adorable Pamela, they will not want the children always hanging about them. But they might find plenty of governesses, I should think, at Brighton."

"Brighton is nearly as large as London, I suppose?"

"You dear ignoramus! no!"

"Why should you think governesses so rife there, then?"

"Because it's a place where people are always going and coming, and changing their servants, and changing their governesses."

"Is it a nice place?"

"Very,—for shops and sea, and Mutton's pies, and Silvani's gimcracks."

"Mutton-pies?"

"Mutton's pies. He's the top pastry-cook. I dare say Mr. Glyn is eating one of his pies now."

"Oh no; it is only six o'clock, and Mr. Glyn does not dine till seven. If I were Rhoda, I would alter that."

"If you were Rhoda, you would probably like seven o'clock dinners and Mr. Glyn; instead of one o'clock dinners and George Mildmay."

"You don't dine early, I'm afraid."

"I will, to please you."

"Oh no, I shall not mind it much."

"When a man comes in, throws off his great coat, cloak, or poncho, puts on his shoes, and feels there is nothing between him and midnight, but his dinner, his wife, his wife's tea-table, his book, and his good fire,—it's no bad thing, I fancy!"

"But *you* sometimes have something between—"

"Ah, don't remind me of that horrid surgery-bell! We'll tie it up, my Pamela!"

Chatting thus, on one thing and another, the light-hearted, happy young people needed no entertainment beyond that with which they supplied one another; nor did Mrs. Althea want any beyond hearing them and looking at

their blythe faces. The hour came only too soon, when, with all her hospitality, she was obliged to turn them out. Pamela allowed it was quite time to go : they kept early hours at home, and George would have a long dark ride afterwards. George protested against the ride being either long or dark ; but he was sure it was time for Mrs. Althea to be in bed and asleep ; and, to prevent his needing any other incentives to depart, she did not gainsay it.

"And pray, how are Mrs. Kitty and Mrs. Brand coming home ?" said George. "Will they, too, foot it ?"

"George, whisper it not in polite circles—they are coming home in a light, covered cart, with plenty of sacks and matting in it."

"Well, I'm glad to hear it, ma'am, for, with Mrs. Kitty's tendency to the rheumatics, such a long walk on a cold night might be dangerous. Give her some hot negus when she comes back ; or, rather, let Hannah make her a treacle-posset, for you must go presently to bed. I, your health's director, insist on it. Good night, dear Mrs. Althea ! May you yet have many happy Christmases ! "

A tear shone in her eye, but a smile was on her lips, as she shook hands with him, and kissed Pamela.

She could not watch them from the door, but she could listen to their retreating footstep.

when those became inaudible, could yet be near them in fancy, and follow them with many a hope, and wish, and prayer. Then she calmly pursued her evening reading; then rang for Hannah to set the supper-tray for the absentees against their return, and to help her to bed.

The cold, and busy thoughts, kept her awake. At length, she heard them arrive, with much talking and laughing, which became hushed as they entered the house. A man's voice, an unknown voice, seemed among them.

Presently, Kitty, on tiptoe, peeped very guardedly into her sister's room.

"Is it you, Kitty? Come in! I am not asleep! Have you had a pleasant evening?"

"Very," said Kitty. "It was such fun. Some of the tricks were capital. I'll tell you about them to-morrow. And how do you think we came home?"

"In the spring-cart, to be sure!"

"In Mr. Knight's gig!"

"Oh, Kitty!"

"He was there, and so polite! And Eliza made room for him, so he sat next us all the performance, and made himself quite agreeable. Then, when we came away, he squired us out, and insisted on calling our carriage, and I could not help laughing, because it was a cart; but, Eliza felt terribly ashamed, and he, seeing it, and naturally anxious to please his new tenant, offered to drive us home, if we didn't mind the

cold, and Eliza said, 'Oh, that will be far pleasanter!' so he did."

"Why, you must have been ready to perish with cold!" cried Mrs. Althea. "Dear me, it was very dangerous!"

"It *was* very cold," said Mrs. Kitty; "but here we are now, and you've left us a famous fire and a good spread. So, now I'll go and give the poor man a tumbler of hot wine and water, and let him go his ways."

"Do you mean Mr. Knight is actually in the house?"

"Certainly. We could not turn him away from the door, you know," said Kitty. "So I must not leave him any longer, for he is wanting something to warm him, and so am I, for this room is very cold,—good night!"

And Mrs. Althea was left to think her own thoughts upon it.

"If they had been girls of fifteen," thought she, "one need not have been surprised; but Mrs. Brand is always doing something disagreeably surprising; and, oh, Kitty, Kitty, you're not fifteen!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

The Sisters Sundered.

Our hardest battle may always be our last ; though we dare not take it for granted it will be so. Christian only passed once through the Valley of Humiliation ; and though he afterwards was scourged by a heavenly chastiser, he took it meekly and went on his way : it did not occur again.

MRS. Althea did not see Mrs. Kitty again for many days. How was this ? you will ask. Marry, it requires some little explanation.

On the morning after the wizard's performance, Mrs. Althea, awaking, found herself with a violent cold in her head, and a sore throat. A cold blast of air had blown open her door when Mr. Knight went away, and she had been lying in a draught all night. Mrs. Althea thought the best and simplest remedy for her cold was lying in bed, and told Hannah she should not get up to breakfast.

" I thinks the ladies up-stairs be of the same mind," said Hannah. " I doesn't hear them stirring."

" Perhaps they would like breakfast in bed

too," said Mrs. Althea. "If they would, you can make it for us all; I dare say they are tired."

Hannah retreated, shaking her head in an ominous, dissatisfied manner, and muttering that Mrs. Kitty was no ways used to be a slug-a-bed o' mornings. Presently Mrs. Althea heard "the bubbling and loud hissing urn" being carried into the parlour, which was followed by the chink of tea-spoons. She guessed Kitty had come down and was bestirring herself, which was confirmed by some one presently tapping at her bedroom-door. She said, "Come in!" expecting to see Kitty; when, lo! in came Mrs. Brand.

"May I be admitted?" said she, putting in her head, and leaving the rest of her person in the passage. Then, tip-toeing in, as if Mrs. Althea were asleep,

"Kitty is tired, and, between ourselves, has a little cold," said she, "so I have persuaded her to breakfast in bed. You won't mind it, will you?"

"Dear me, no," said Mrs. Althea. "I thought you had both better do so. Persuade her to remain in bed all day, if she thinks it will do her any good. I should be quite sorry for her to come down on my account."

"That is just what I told her I was sure you would say," said Mrs. Brand; "and her only objection is that you will send up Mr. Forest or

Mr. Mildmay to her, if either of them should come."

"If that is all, I promise her I will not," said Mrs. Althea, "so let her keep herself warm with an easy mind. I hope she will be quite well to-morrow."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Brand. "Might I suggest some mutton-broth for dinner?"

"Certainly. It is already ordered," said Mrs. Althea.

"Thank you, thank you," said Mrs. Brand, gliding away, "I am sure Kitty will like it."

"What does the woman mean by her 'thank yous,'" thought Mrs. Althea, chafing; "does she mean to make out Kitty's comforts less cared for by her sister than her friend?"

About an hour after breakfast, Mrs. Brand stepped in again, in a warm shawl, with her crochet in her hand. Mrs. Althea, preferring to be alone, closed her eyes, as if asleep; for which artifice she was rewarded by seeing through her eyelashes Mrs. Brand tiptoeing about the room, setting it to rights, as she considered, but in reality putting everything out of its place, and out of Mrs. Althea's reach.

"Please don't move that," said Mrs. Althea, suddenly.

"Oh," said Mrs. Brand, starting, "are you awake? I thought I would come and sit with you a little, that you might not miss Kitty."

"Thank you, you are very kind ; but, do you know, I really prefer being alone ; for my throat is too sore to make talking very pleasant or safe, and, if left to myself, I shall very likely doze."

"Is there anything I can get for you ? Lozenges ? liquorice ? sage-tea ?"

"Thank you, I have, or had, everything within reach. Will you be so good as to replace the bonbonnière by the bed-side ?"

"Certainly. Would you like a book ?"

"No, thank you."

"Or newspaper ?"

"No, thank you. I am never fond of reading in bed ; and holding either book or newspaper, would make my arms cold."

"And, by the bye, there is a dreadful draught down this chimney of yours. I should recommend a chimney-board."

"What, when you prevailed on Kitty to sleep up stairs, because she had no chimney in her room ?" cried Mrs. Althea.

Mrs. Brand was out of countenance. "And a good thing I did," said she, quickly recovering herself, "for now she is able to have a roaring fire. I recommend you one."

"Oh, no, thank you," said Mrs. Althea, who really felt in want of one, but thought, if she made her bedroom too comfortable, there would be no getting Mrs. Brand out of it.

Shortly afterwards, however, Hannah made

her appearance, with sticks, paper, and coals, and began to lay the fire.

"Is that your idea, Hannah, or Mrs. Brand's?" said Mrs. Althea.

"I doesn't take my orders from Mrs. Brand," said Hannah, indignantly. "I knew you'd want it, and Mr. George would be ordering of it. If Mrs. Kitty lays in bed, I must do the best I can in Mrs. Kitty's place. Mrs. Brand? Bless ye! *she* order you a fire? She orders one for herself, whenever it takes her fancy; but she thinks of nobody else, not *she*."

"You are mistaken, Hannah; for she offered me a fire just now."

"Offered, indeed! Were she going to pay for it? I should think my missises might order theirselves fires when they wanted 'em, without *her* offers."

Such is poor human nature, that Mrs. Althea could not help feeling a kind of satisfaction in this open partisanship of her maid. She felt it was wrong, and took herself to task for it with sighs and humiliation.

At noon, Mr. Forest called on her. He was afraid she had a touch of the prevailing epidemic, and recommended her keeping in bed till he saw her again. "How's Mrs. Kitty, after her frolic?" said he.

"How came you to know she had had one?" said Mrs. Althea.

"Oh, we doctors have ways and means. My

groom was at the conjuror's, and a good many other grooms too, I fancy. The Western Wizard did not draw a very genteel house. Moreover, Mr. Knight sat next to your sister's friend, and Mr. Knight drove your sister and her friend home. There now!"

"Ah, well, it is a disagreeable subject," said Mrs. Althea. "I shall be glad when the man is gone."

"I don't believe he's going," said Mr. Forest. "What makes you think so?"

"I had better not meddle with other people's affairs, I believe," said she smiling.

Mr. Forest had, to Mrs. Althea's belief, left the house about a quarter of an hour, when she seemed to hear his voice through the walls, from the parlour; and, her senses being quickened by the circumstance, she presently fancied she heard a man's foot stealthily ascending the stairs.

"Mrs. Brand never *can* be candid!" thought she. "After being closeted with Mr. Forest, she is taking him up to see Kitty, who must be more seriously ill than I supposed!"

She hastily rang the bell. Hannah answered it, looking very glum.

"Is Mr. Forest still in the house, Hannah?"

"No, mum."

"I thought I heard him going up to Mrs. Kitty."

"No, mum."

"Are you quite sure?"

"Yes, mum!"—throwing nearly a scuttle-full of coals on the fire.

"I suppose I am a little feverish, and that makes me fanciful," said Mrs. Althea, sinking back on her pillow.

Hannah was evidently in very bad humour, and she therefore would not say anything more to upset her; otherwise, she would presently have asked her whether some one had not been quietly let out of the house-door.

"Mrs. Brand is doubtless gone for her walk," thought she. "She lays much stress on regular exercise."

But, soon after, the chance opening of two doors at once enabled her to hear, for a moment, Mrs. Brand and Kitty chatting very merrily.

"Kitty cannot be seriously ill, to talk and laugh like that," cogitated Mrs. Althea. And this was her only piece of comfort the rest of the day.

The next day passed very much like the first. Mrs. Althea expected to see Mrs. Kitty; but Mrs. Brand appeared instead. "Kate was still in bed. In fact, her cold was rather more troublesome, though nothing at all to signify."

When Mrs. Brand used the expression "in fact," it was generally a sign that the fact was being departed from. Mrs. Althea applied to Hannah.

"Hannah, is Mrs. Kitty very ill?"

"Not as I knows on, mum. Mrs. Brand takes all the waiting on herself."

"Do you mean you've not seen her?"

"Well, ma'am, I've seen her nightcap peeping from under the bedclothes: but she has a cold, she says, and covers herself up close."

"Have you heard her speak?"

"Oh dear, yes, mum."

"Is her voice altered?"

"Altered, mum?"

"Like a person's with a sore throat or hoarseness?"

"Oh dear, no, mum, Mrs. Kitty speaks up, like."

As Hannah was still undeniably grumpy, Mrs. Althea gave up the cross-examination in despair, and said,

"Go up-stairs, and ask Mrs. Kitty, from me, how she is now."

Hannah went, and returned with, "She says she's purely, thanke'e, mum, and doesn't want for nothing."

"Did you see her?"

"Mrs. Brand told me not to let in the draught, mum."

"Mrs. Brand blows hot and cold about draughts," murmured Mrs. Althea. "If Mr. Forest or George come to-day, I shall insist on her seeing whichever of them it is."

But neither of them came; and still Mrs.

Brand's bulletins were interlarded with "the truth is," and "in fact."

Kitty continued up-stairs, and Hannah grew more and more cross and uncommunicative. Mrs. Althea was in a nervous fever. She was too ill to leave her bed; no one called; and she had nothing to do but to lie still and torment herself with perturbing, improbable conjectures. She was weary, weary! as Mariana in the Moated Grange; almost ready to get one of the ploughmen to carry her up-stairs. As for Mrs. Brand, she quite hated her stealthy tread and rustling gown. When Mrs. Brand, invested *pro tem.* with Kitty's bunch of keys, came to indulge Mrs. Althea with a little chat, it was always to tell her that there was very little wine in the cellar, or the tea was running short, or the pantry window was broken, *Hannah* said by the cat; broken so that a man might put his hand in and help himself to mince-pies without the least difficulty! *She* believed Hannah and some one else played into each other's hands; she thought Hannah was making a purse; she had found one of Mrs. Althea's cotton-reels on the kitchen dresser, hidden away in a tea-cup! Concealment looked like . . . well, she would not say what it looked like; but she must own she liked people to be open and above-board.

"*Do you?*" thought the indignant Mrs. Althea.

These visits were terrible inflictions; but

Kitty would not be easy unless they were made ; and in the intervals, Mrs. Althea could do nothing but listen to the flail in the barn, and the ticking of the clock on the stairs. Could do nothing else ? Why, Mrs. Brand said to her daily, " I know you don't mind being alone, because you have such a well-stored mind ! " Alas, her mind refused to give up its stores—she could hardly pray, she could hardly think, she could not even lie dozing " in indolent vacuity of thought." Her mind was wide-awake, feverishly so, but it could not meditate, it could only feel. She envied the cat that sat blinking before the fire.

Three days thus passed, without her seeing any one but Mrs. Brand and Hannah ; the latter getting so upset that Mrs. Althea began, in dismay, to consider the possibility of her becoming completely unsettled and giving warning. There was terror in the thought. She knew Kitty had words with Hannah now and then, and by no means thought her too excellent to be replaced ; but, to Mrs. Althea, who hated strange faces about her, and to whose ways Hannah had become accustomed, the idea of change was distraction. She resolved, if things did not mend in twenty-four hours, to come to an understanding with Hannah the next day.

Things neither mended nor worsened, excepting that Mrs. Althea's illness increased. In the night, she was obliged to ring for Hannah.

Hannah was sleeping heavily and did not hear the bell. "Oh, Kitty, Kitty!" thought Mrs. Althea, "it would not have been thus with *you*." She lay still, endured the pain, and did without the remedy.

"What a poor creature am I!" thought she. "How small are my powers of endurance, how much I depend upon others! Mrs. Brand says mockingly what many are in the habit of saying in good faith, and always grieve me by saying—'I know you have such infinite resources!' Where are they? in what respect have I the advantage of my humblest, most unintellectual neighbour? I can neither frame a prayer with any fervour, nor even recollect an entire hymn. If I get through a verse, the rest fleets from me, and I find myself tossing and fretting for Kitty."

And thus have thousands felt before you, Mrs. Althea. "What a piece of work is a man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties!" And yet what a poor creature he is when laid aside by disease, and weakness, and impaired spirits. Sometimes, indeed, he soars superior to them all; but that is seldom when the pressure is on the nerves; or on the affections.

The best way for a sufferer under trials that *will* make themselves felt, is not so much to grapple with them as foes as to embrace them as friends; saying to each of them in turn, "Come, thou blessed of the Lord! Fit me to inherit the kingdom prepared for me!"

On the fourth day, Mr. Forest called ; and he came in, looking almost as cross as Hannah. Mrs. Althea's heart began to flutter ; was all the world, all her little world, going wrong ?

" I have been very poorly since you were here last," said she, deprecatingly, and holding out her hand, " so that it seemed to me as if you were never coming again."

" I suppose," said Mr. Forest bluntly, and taking her hand professionally, not amicably :— " I suppose, Madam, you really *did* think so, by your calling in another medical adviser."

" What *can* you mean ?" exclaimed Mrs. Althea, breathlessly. " What other medical adviser ? "

" Who but Mr. Knight, of course ?" said Mr. Forest, gruffly.

" My dear Mr. Forest ! I have seen no one but you ! Never received a professional visit but from you and George Mildmay since the beginning of my illness ! How can you have ever imagined it ? I can hardly help laughing at the idea !" said she, and the next moment her handkerchief was at her eyes.

" Well," said he, softening a little, " the strangest reports do certainly get about ! It is said, in more than one quarter, that Mr. Knight has been seen coming daily out of this house, and that you, for want of confidence in your old advisers, have called him in."

"Never was anything in this world so false ! I never even spoke to the man!"

"Well, it seemed strange to me, I must say. After 'all the friendship that we two have shared,'—it was such a breach of professional etiquette, that I felt very angry with the fellow, and certainly rather angry with you. We had gone on so long together, and all the county knew you were, or said you were, so well satisfied."

"So I was : so I am. How *could* the report get about?"

"I heard of it first from John Fox, who said Knight was attending Mrs. Hall. That, of course, meant you. Next I heard it from the Simpsons, who said he was attending one of the Mrs. Halls. That, you know, might do for either of you."

"Either of us ? Is it possible that Kitty—"

Mrs. Althea rang the bell with energy.

"Hannah !" said she with severity, as soon as her domestic appeared, "how dared you keep from me that Mrs. Kitty was so ill ?"

"Law, mum," burst forth Hannah, with an air of being greatly injured, "'twern't no secret of mine, but Mrs. Brand said it was to be kept one, and Mrs. Kitty said so too."

"How dared you conceal from me," pursued Mrs. Althea with increasing heat, "that Mr Knight was attending Mrs. Kitty ?"

"There ! I wipe my hands of the whole kit on 'em," said Hannah, suiting the action to the word by wiping her hands in her apron :

" 'T were no affair of mine—I knowed ye wouldn't like it; but, were I to tell if they said I wasn't to?"

" How often has he been, Hannah?"

" Three times, mum."

" What does he say is the matter with her?"

" Well, mum, I made bold to ask, and they told me Harry's shoes."

" Harry's shoes!" ejaculated Mrs. Althea.

" Harry's slippers, then," said Hannah, getting bewildered and impatient.

" Erysipelas," interposed Mr. Forest.

" That's the word, sir," said Hannah.

" Nothing more likely," said Mr. Forest, " to induce an attack of erysipelas in the head than the cold night-drive in Mr. Knight's gig."

" Hannah," said Mrs. Althea, who was in tears, " go up directly to Mrs. Kitty, and say, Mr. Forest is coming to see her."

" No, no, not I," interrupted Mr. Forest; " I don't interfere with other men's practice."

" But, if you don't see her, I shall never know the real truth about her state—it will never be told me till too late....Perhaps I may even never see her again." And Mrs. Althea wept bitterly.

" Psha!" cried Mr. Forest, " I never can stand a woman's tears; least of all yours. So step up, Hannah, and say, I'm coming just to pay a friendly visit. I must follow pretty close, or Mrs. Brand will be down upon me."

Mrs. Althea continued shedding tears during his absence, which was very short. "I wash my hands of it," said he, shrugging his shoulders. "Knight has begun, and Knight may make an end. The fellow can't well blunder in so simple a case, and will probably bring her through safe enough."

"Is it erysipelas?"

"Oh yes, it has passed right over her head and is coming down now over her forehead, like a red curtain—"

"Poor Kitty! Oh, don't forsake her."

"Nay, 'tis she has forsaken me—she won't have a word to say to me—when I got upstairs, she called out, 'Oh, my goodness, Mr. Forest, don't come in—I hav'n't got on my best night-cap!' And then there was such tittering and giggling, as might have suited a couple of school-girls, rather than middle-aged ladies. As if I cared about her night-cap!—I'll come and see *you*, Mrs. Althea, since the report about your calling in Knight is false; but as for Mrs. Kitty,—as she has brewed, so she must bake. George Mildmay generally takes the Collington round; George Mildmay has lately had it pretty much to himself—George Mildmay may make friends or foes with Mr. Knight as he pleases—I am going to do neither one nor the other."

It struck Mrs. Althea that an ill-concealed tone of peevishness—when speaking of George

Mildmay—might have something to do with the successful wooing of Pamela.

"But, Mr. Forest," said she, anxiously, "erysipelas is a very dangerous thing, sometimes, is it not? Do you think Kitty will take it heavily?"

"Can't say, indeed—very likely; for she is an inflammatory subject."

"Dear me; it must be very painful in the head, I should think?"

"Rely upon it, it is."

"Do you think she will get light-headed, towards night?"

"Very likely."

"And with nobody to nurse her but Mrs. Brand! Oh, my case *is* hard!" And the tears again trickled down her pale cheeks.

"My dear Mrs. Althea," said Mr. Forest, kindly, "let us make the best of things. It may be a lucky thing for us all that Mrs. Brand is here. You and I don't like her, but Mrs. Kitty does; and she will have a nurse to her mind, and one who, for her own credit's sake, will show herself both able and willing."

"I hope she may," said Mrs. Althea, drying her eyes. "I am sure Kitty is welcome to the whole of her services. Hannah is quite enough for me; and when I cannot have her, I would rather be left quite alone."

"Ah, you know well how to bear solitude—our mind affords inexhaustible resources;"

said Mr. Forest, patronisingly repeating the old hackneyed axiom, as if there were really something new in it. He went away, pleasing himself that this judiciously administered compliment had made Mrs. Althea quite comfortable; while she, after a fleeting smile at its being so wide of the mark, fell thinking again upon Kitty.

"Oh, my case *is* hard!" She had never uttered that sad lament during the long season of her captivity; but she felt it to be very, very hard, now that it prevented her nursing her dear and only sister.

Mrs. Brand came in with one of her made up smiles and melo-dramatic attitudes. "Well," cried she, stifling a little affected laugh, "it was well our two medical men did not meet on the stairs—Knight had but just gone."

"I cannot laugh," said Mrs. Althea, sternly. "You have done me the greatest harm in your power—put my sister into the way of getting dangerously ill—and put it out of my power to see her."

Mrs. Brand stood with an air of mock surprise. "My dear Althea," cried she, "what are you thinking of?"

"I have said my say," said Mrs. Althea, doggedly.

"My dear creature, you hardly know what you *have* said. I am sure you did not mean to wound me. I am sure nothing could be farther from your intention than being rude to me:

than saying the most cutting things that ever were said to me in my life! *I?* put dear Kate in the way of being ill? Why, was it not a medical man who proposed the thing? Might not I have been the victim myself? Was I a likely person to endanger the health of my dearest friend? a friend who never said a cutting thing to me? Why, am I not now proving my attachment to her by nursing her in what is considered by some an infectious complaint?"

"I am really too ill to have any altercation about it," said Mrs Althea, turning her face to the pillow. "You say you love her, and I conclude you do. I hope, therefore, that she is in safe and kind hands. Do your best for her, and that will be the truest kindness to us both."

"I can assure you, I don't need prompting to a duty that will be such a pleasure," said Mrs. Brand, looking at her watch. "Dear me, I must return to the dear invalid. It is a quarter past four, I declare."

Just then, the old clock on the stairs struck four.

"Hannah!" said Mrs. Althea authoritatively to her servant, who entered as Mrs. Brand passed out, "set that clock forward! Nothing in this house over which I have any power, shall tell lies if I can help it."

"Then you'd better alter Mrs. Brand's watch, mum," said Hannah, "instead of the clock."

CHAPTER XXIX.

The Sisters Re-united.

It would have been more honourable of David to ask for the strength of an ox to bear his trials, than for the wings of a dove to flee from them.—MATTHEW HENRY.

THE two sisters were very ill. Mrs. Kitty's fever ran high, she was delirious; and Mr. Knight and Mrs. Brand had rather a troubled sense of their responsibility. Mrs. Brand, dismayed at Kitty's swollen and fearful appearance as the eruption crept down her face, and constantly employed in dipping soft rags in lotion and applying them to the skin, took Mrs. Althea at her word, and gave her very little of her company; so little that Mrs. Althea, in ~~Hannah~~'s necessary absences about her ordinary work, was literally neglected, and often in want of aid which she would have been thankful to receive even from Mrs. Brand. She had desired Hannah to get a girl to wash up and be generally useful; but the girl was ignorant and uncouth, broke or cracked nearly as much as she washed, and required so much supervision

as to give Hannah very little more time. Then a char-woman was summoned, who had a great gift for eating, drinking, gossiping, and sitting long over her meals. She seemed a worse help than the girl. Hannah's face grew more and more sour; Mrs. Althea's spirits became lower and lower; and when George Mildmay came in one day and found the front door ajar, the cold north wind blowing in on Mrs. Althea, who was helplessly coughing, crying, and ringing for the women shut up in the kitchen, he quite stormed—made his own way, first into the kitchen, then up to Mrs. Brand, whom he met on the landing-place, and rebuked in no measured terms for the condition in which he had found Mrs. Althea; assuring her, with a menacing brow, that before the day was out, he should provide her with some one who would not neglect her.

Mrs. Brand turned white and then red, as alarm and hate reigned alternately; but without minding her changes of colour, George boldly stalked in to the bedside of Mrs. Kitty, who was lying in a sort of stupor, with her eyelids too swollen to unclose. There was not much comfort to carry to Mrs. Althea from that quarter; he was guilty of a pious fraud when he went down and told her that Mrs. Kitty had taken the complaint heavily, but would do well. Hannah, repentant and alert, had been repairing her neglects in his absence, and Mrs.

Althea, with everything comfortably arranged about her, was now lying still, though with tear-stained cheeks, incessant cough, and a pulse so weak and irregular, that George's heart sank as he felt it. He supplied her with liquid as tenderly as a woman: talked to her soothingly and hopefully; reminded her of heavenly consolations; and promised her that Pamela should be with her as soon as he could drive her over, to be with her til she was in the parlour again. Oh, what balm to a sore heart there was in every look, word, and accent. And did *he* feel no repayment in his own bosom? There was a tear in his eye as he stooped over her and wished her good-bye; a genuine "God-be-with-you:" and other tears started into his eyes as he drove off.

The expectation of happiness is all but happiness itself. Mrs. Althea was dangerously and painfully ill, but she lay as still and composed as her cough would let her. In a couple of hours Pamela was at her side; those sweet eyes, full of love, met hers whenever she raised her heavy eyelids; those gentle hands ministered to every want; those light feet trod noiselessly the floor. Everything, as if by magic, went right; the kettle on the hob did not boil over, slates in the fire did not explode and scatter about the room; hinges of doors did not creak; windows no longer rattled for want of having the catches fastened; the barley-water

did not chill ; the chimney did not smoke. Often, often did those well-worn, but never to be hackneyed lines, recur to the grateful Mrs. Althea :—

When pain and sickness wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou !

Need it be said, that under the incessant care of George and Pamela, Mrs. Althea became better ? For a few days and nights, she was on the brink of the grave ; but gradually the alarming symptoms abated, and she slowly but surely improved. Then, at intervals, came sweet and restoring snatches of converse with her loved companion, who proved mighty in the Scriptures, and full of original and high-souled thought. George would linger by the half-hour together, to hear these two talk of one thing and another ; Mrs. Althea saying little, but drawing out Pamela's stores of mind so nicely ; and Pamela appearing in the most advantageous light, in the performance of the kindest offices, and in the revelation of higher and deeper thoughts and feelings than would otherwise have been called forth. He had always considered her the most charming girl in the world, but now,—

He saw her upon nearer view,
An angel ; yet a woman too.

When Mrs. Brand, who was getting dreadfully weary of Mrs. Kitty's bed-room, except

during Mr. Knight's visits, stole in on pretence of being anxious to know how dear Mrs. Althea was getting on, she found herself *de trop*. But she had her seasons of refreshment; the friends of Mrs. Althea and Mrs. Kitty, learning from George and Mr. Forest how ill they were, called continually to inquire, and sent in everything at hazard that they thought likely to be fancied by the invalids; consequently, Mrs. Brand, ruling the larder, fared luxuriously: and instead of confining herself so rigidly to Mrs. Kitty's apartment, she proceeded to entertain visitors, in gloves and her best caps, enlarging on Kitty's late danger and present disfigurement, and not sparing those praises of self which are said to be no recommendation. Pamela, finding her continually thus occupied, availed herself of the opportunity to look in on Mrs. Kitty, who, very unsightly in her appearance, and very weak after the fever had left her, was in low spirits, and much given to wonder why Eliza was so long away. She was also fidgety about Mrs. Althea, though by no means aware of what her late danger had been, till Pamela spoke of it. Then Mrs. Kitty became very much agitated; she had been kept in the dark, she had been wanted; she must and would see dear Althea.

Mrs. Kitty was no longer in bed; she was sitting up by the fire, in a large easy chair, stuffed full of pillows, attired in various gar-

ments of loose flannel, with a sort of horseman's coat over all. She would go down, that she would, if it were only to give one kiss to her dear Althea.

Pamela was afraid of the consequences, and tried to dissuade, but in vain. Hearing Hannah on the stairs, she called her in to the rescue, but without success. She had no mind to summon the only effectual person, Mrs. Brand, who was surrounded by a circle of morning callers in the parlour. The opportunity was propitious, Pamela felt that in Mrs. Kitty's case, she should have availed herself of it: and Hannah, after a moment's pause, set down the caudle-cup of arrow-root in her hand, before the fire; and then, saying, "You carried Missis once, so there's no reason why I should not carry you,"—suddenly enveloped her from head to foot in a blanket, snatched her up in her sturdy arms, and triumphantly bore her down stairs.

Mrs. Althea, unprepared for such a visitation, though Pamela had made a vain effort to get the start of Hannah, who took up the whole breadth of the stairs, was utterly confounded when she saw Hannah bear in this struggling mass of blankets and flannels, which when Mrs. Kitty had fought a way for her head out of it, disclosed her poor, altered face. The meeting was too much for the sisters—they stretched out their arms to one another before they could be brought together; locked each

other in a strict embrace, and burst into tears. Pamela, kneeling up on the bed to support Mrs. Althea, wept too, and Hannah indulged in a quiet roar under her apron.

Fancy George Mildmay entering in the midst of this tableau! To close the scene, fancy Mrs. Brand standing in the doorway!

There is not much more we shall tell. Some things, however, require to be told of. How that Mrs. Brand fell into a rage, at the use Kitty had made of her absence; how George (out of Mrs. Althea's hearing) had made the ironical remark, "When the cat's away, the mice will play." How that Mrs. Brand re-crminated by saying that he wanted to injure Mr. Knight by spoiling his case; how George resented this, as a speech unbecoming a lady, and wished to know in what way he had interfered with Mr. Knight throughout Mrs. Kitty's illness. How Kitty was quite sure Eliza had meant all for the best, but must own she felt deeply hurt that Althea's danger had been concealed from her; how Mrs. Brand must own she thought this was rather an unexpected return for her unwearied watchfulness, and could not have supposed Kate could be so ungrateful.

However, it was plain, Kate was *now* under foreign and malign influence; Kate, forgetful of the recent past, would never see things in their true light any more; she, Mrs. Brand, was

evidently no longer wanted—a newer face was preferred ; Miss Bohun could make herself very agreeable down-stairs, and up-stairs too, and would doubtless find it agreeable to herself to remain there as long as Mr. Mildmay was calling every day and paying absolute visitations, to the neglect of his other patients. She, Mrs. Brand, must succumb before the rising sun ; there was a good old saying, though a vulgar one, that too many cooks spoiled the broth ; *she* had made Kate's broth many a day, without one speck of fat on it ; she hoped her new cook, metaphorically to call her so, would do as well.

Mrs. Brand expected Kate to be subdued by this tirade ; but, on the contrary, Kate resented it. Eliza was saying a great many things that were untrue and exaggerated, which she would be sorry for when she cooled. Mrs. Brand was never cooler, and had said nothing she should ever be sorry for, because she had said nothing that was either untrue or exaggerated.

When contending parties reach the logical point of contradictory opposition, Peace unfurls her wings in despair, and soars back to her own blue heaven.

And ruder words will soon rush in,
To spread the breach that words begin ;
And eyes forget the gentle ray
They wore in friendship's smiling day,
And voices lose the tone that shed
A tenderness round all they said—
Till, fast declining, one by one,
The sweetesses of love are gone.

Thus was it with Mrs. Brand and Mrs. Kitty. The former, thinking her services too valuable to be yet spared, took a high tone, and said that she was clearly no longer wanted nor wished for, and should therefore go elsewhere, to friends more desirous of her company.—“She had had a letter.” Kate was sorry she should think her nursing undervalued; she felt truly grateful for it, but it was not a propitious time to say so now, as she saw Eliza would not believe her. She hoped Eliza would be happy wherever she was going, and see things in a truer, kinder light, when they were apart. Mrs. Brand swallowed a hasty answer, snatched up her work-bag, and went off to answer her letter and pack up.

She was really going; but a few days necessarily intervened. In the first place, she had nowhere immediately to go to, till her way was paved a little. In the second, she must see Mr. Knight, and get rid, somehow, of their half-settled arrangement, which, on her part, had never been really in earnest. Lastly, she had made much profession to morning callers of her devotion to the sisters, and it would have an ill appearance if she forsook them too abruptly, as she was not leaving any one behind her to tell her story as she would like it told.

She kept staying on, therefore, on sufferance, as it were, to arrange her own plans and suit her own convenience. Perhaps she was in secret hope that Kitty would give in; but

Kitty, when her temper once was up, took long to recover herself. She bore herself so bluntly to the late friend of her bosom, that Mrs. Althea, hearing Pamela's report of the state of parties, compassionated Mrs. Brand, and was very near being so soft as to ask her to remain a little longer as a personal favour.

From this weakness, George and Pamela saved her. Meanwhile, Miss Roberta Rickards, who had been one of the morning visitors, and who had felt indignant at the way in which Mrs. Brand had assumed the airs of lady of the house, and denied her access to Mrs. Althea, now, under the milder nature of Pamela, obtained the admittance she had before sought in vain. Greatly shocked at Mrs. Althea's appearance, and still resenting Mrs. Brand's veto, Miss Rickards begged Pamela to take a little of the relaxation she surely had well earned, while she spent a half-hour with her old friend. Pamela withdrew, and Miss Rickards began to unfold to her invalid listener the various delinquencies of Mrs. Brand; not only by giving herself airs that were quite unbecoming a person of so little consequence, but mischievously colouring and twisting even the simplest domestic incidents to every chance visitor, so that any uninformed person might have supposed that the sisters led a cat and dog life; that Mrs. Althea's whims were insupportable, and that she was now being made a tool of by Pamela and George Mildmay, who were suiting

their own purposes of constantly seeing one another by their sedulous attendance on her.

When Mrs. Althea heard this, she was far too indignant to feel any disposition, even from compassion, to induce Mrs. Brand to prolong her stay. Kitty was now sufficiently convalescent to be established, much wrapped up, by the parlour fire; and as Mrs. Brand's kind ministrations were much remitted or ostentatiously paraded, Pamela found it desirable to attend to both her friends, which Mrs. Althea's daily amendment enabled her to do without defrauding her of her prior claims. Mrs. Althea, indeed, considered herself able to return to her sofa; but George, with a knowing look and smile, advised her to continue in her room till Mrs. Brand was fairly out of the house.

That hour arrived. George himself handed her into the old yellow fly that was to convey her to the next town. On returning to the house, he found Mrs. Kitty shedding a few tears. "Come," said he, kindly, and sitting down by her as he spoke, "Know your true friends from your false ones. That lady who has just left you is no real friend to any one but herself. She is fond of power, and fond of mischief-making. Remember what Solomon says, 'A whisperer divides friends.' If she had been here much longer, she would have alienated you from Mrs. Althea."

"Oh, no, no! No human power could do that!"

"Well, she would have done her best in that

way, at any rate. She had not even a humane concern in your sister."

And he forcibly depicted the condition in which he had found Mrs. Althea, deserted by all, and in want of assistance. Kitty was greatly moved. "No true friend to me," said she, "no woman of any feeling, could have so neglected my sister."

"Enough said: we won't think any more of her," said George. "Now we will carry in Mrs. Althea, and set her face to face with you, and stir the fire, and have a jolly tea, and Pamela shall make the tea, and I'll be as happy—we'll *all* be as happy as kings; and a good deal happier!"

And so they were; and George would not let Pamela leave his and her old friends, nor would Mr. and Mrs. Bohun receive her home till Mrs. Kitty was quite brisk and blooming again, and Mrs. Althea was as well as she was ever likely to be in this world, and quite comfortable and happy. George contrived to see them every day; generally in the evening, when his work was over, and he could enjoy a long, uninterrupted fireside chat. During these blissful evenings, it would be difficult to say which of the four was happiest.

"Surely," says John Foster, "the great principle of continued interest, in those who love one another, cannot be to talk always in the style of simple, direct personality; but to introduce personality into the subject; to talk

of topics, so as to involve each other's feelings, without perpetually talking *at* each other."

One evening, George told them with glee, that he had been offered a capital opening, as far as money went, in Tasmania; but that, having no fancy for expatriation, he had gone straight to Mr. Knight, and rubbed out old scores, by handsomely offering him what he had no mind for himself. "And, do you know, the fellow was quite touched, and said it would be the making of him, with so much about my generosity and so forth, that I was ashamed. I told him I should pick up some amends in Collington, and he said he would leave me the good-will, and the cottage too, if I liked it; and I told him I certainly should. I laughed, and told him he had better take out a wife. He must sail in a fortnight."

And in a fortnight he sailed; and took out a wife. Mrs. Althea and Mrs. Kitty received wedding cards.—From Mr. and Mrs. Charles Glyn? Oh, that was soon afterwards. From Mr. and Mrs. Mildmay? *They sent cake.* From Mr. and Mrs. Knight! Mr. Knight had married Mrs. Brand!

THE END.



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